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DEADWOOD DICK, JR.'S, SCOOP.

BY EDWARD L. WHEELER.



DICK STEPPED INTO THE BIG BOX AND SOON THE HEAVY LID WAS CLOSED DOWN UPON HIM.

Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Scoop;

OR,

THE BIG HAUL AT HARD HOLE.

The Story of the Reclaimed Placer.

BY EDWARD L. WHEELER,

AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS,
ETC., ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE GOLD-SEEKER'S HOME.

"STOP!"

Clear and ringing the command, but in a sweet, musical, feminine voice.

And, so unexpected the order, so complete the surprise, that the two travelers instantly drew rein, with exclamations of amazement.

They were in a narrow mountain pass which, just here, widened a little, only to narrow again a few yards further on, and there, at the place of narrowing, had suddenly appeared a young woman with a rifle pressed to her shoulder.

She was young, not more than twenty-five at most, and good-looking, with a full, rounded form, shapely in every line and curve. Her hair was dark, and her eyes keen and flashing. She seemed altogether out of place in that wild region, for it was miles from any camp.

The two men whom she had thus brought to a stop were big, burly, ruffianly fellows—about as hard-looking a pair as can be imagined. One had a perfectly hideous face, he being spotted all over with livid spots about the size of a dime, either by nature or disease, and these spots were in great contrast to the rusty-reddish hue of the rest of the surface.

His companion was no more reputable, in looks, though not similarly disfigured. He had an evil face, one that bespoke for him a hard and cruel nature and upon which crime had made its imprint. He was the larger of the two, almost a giant in size, and had a belt full of formidable weapons. The other had only one revolver in sight, carried in a leathern pocket that swung by his right hip.

"Blazes!" the larger of the pair ejaculated, at the word of command, and he drew his horse to a stop with a jerk. "What d'ye mean, gal?"

"Thunder!" from the other at the same time. "Look out whar ye p'int that 'ar thing, gal! I b'lieve you wouldn't have no more sense 'n to shoot! Lower et, now, or by ther—"

"Put up your hands!" came the young woman's peremptory demand.

Prompt, though under protest, was the obedience, since there was no help for it. There was that in the manner of the plucky little woman which carried the conviction that she meant "shoot."

"See hyer!" demanded the giant of the pair. "What d'ye mean by holdin' us up in this hyer fashion, gal? Ar' ye a road-agent? an' do ye mean to call us fer our wealth? 'Cause ef ye ar', ye ar' goin' ter fool yerself, fer me an' ther Spotted Tiger ar' as poor as plucked pigeons."

"That's what's the matter," the Spotted Tiger supported. "But, et can't be that a angel like you kin be a road-agent, gal; what 's yer reason fer this deal? Ye have dropped on us heavy, an' that's ther fack. What do et mean? Hang me ef you ain't a good-looker, anyhow! Come, lower that 'ar gun, an' let us talk sense an' see what is ther—"

"Make a single move toward a weapon, either of you," the young woman warned positively, "and I will tumble you off your

horse. More, if you do not turn about at once, and go back the way you came, I will shoot, anyhow."

"What?" cried the Spotted Tiger. "You mean ter say we can't go any furdur 'long this hyer pass, gal?"

"That is just what I do mean! Back with you!"

"Ar' we goin' to stan' this, an' from a gal like that 'ar, Giant Jack?" and the Spotted Tiger turned to his companion, his spots taking on a darker hue while the surrounding skin paled.

"Not by a mighty sight!" Giant Jack roared. "Drop that gun, gal, or by the great—"

"Take care! If you value life, do not touch a weapon. I will not warn you again, but will fire, and my bullet can find your heart before you can draw, for I am no baby with the rifle."

The baffled rascals cursed fiercely, but did not take the risk of disobeying the defiant woman who thus held the "drop" on them with such nerve.

"But, what does et mean?" the Spotted Tiger demanded. "Why do ye stop us an' order us back?"

"It means business, that is all I will tell you. Will you turn and go? or will you force me to kill you here?"

"We'll go, we'll go," promised Giant Jack, in haste, as the deadly rifle removed its bead from the Tiger's heart to cover his own.

"Yas, we'll go," agreed the Spotted Tiger, "seein' that you have got ther best of et. But, tell us, gal, what is beyond hyer that you ar' so 'fraid of?"

"There is nothing beyond here that I am afraid of. I am afraid of nothing, and least of all of you. Go, now, and without further parley. I will count twenty, and if you are not out of sight by the time I cover the score I will make cold meat of you."

Cold words, and grim, and hard, to come from lips so pretty; and, there was a glitter of the eyes that spoke even louder than the words, and the two hard-looking men spoke to their horses and turned.

"Yas, we go, cuss ye!" cried the Spotted Tiger. "You have got ther drop on us an' we can't help et. But, we ar' comin' back ag'in, I warn ye, an' then we'll find out what secret ye ar' guardin' at ther rifle's p'int. We're bound ter know what's beyond hyer."

This while the young woman was counting the deadly twenty, and as she had already nearly reached the half-way mark, they struck their horses with their heels and dashed away, getting out of range before the closing number was reached.

No sooner had they disappeared from view than the young woman's face paled, her hands trembled, and she leaned her shoulder against the rocky wall of the narrow pass for support.

While she stood thus, running steps were heard coming from the opposite direction along the pass, and in a few seconds a man appeared upon the scene.

"What is it, Myra?" he asked. "Why did you signal me? Are you sick—yes, I can see you are—"

"No, no; I am not sick, Frank; I have had a great fright."

"A fright? Ha! here are tracks. At last, then, we have been discovered. Who were they, Myra?"

"Two of the worst-looking wretches my eyes ever beheld, Frank. They were big men, one almost a giant, and the other was horribly spotted, like a snake."

"But, you foiled them, brave little woman that you are! It is what we have been dreading, that our secret would sooner or later be discovered, and now that has happened."

"No, not yet, Frank, for I turned them back."

"True; but they will never rest until

they know what is here. They are sure to come again."

"Yes, for so they have taken oath to do. They are determined to learn what secret I was guarding so carefully. Oh! I wonder how I ever faced them as I did, and overcame them."

"It is no wonder to me, Myra dear; I know how you did it. You are as brave a woman as ever lived. But, I tremble as I think what might have happened. It was wrong of me to allow you to stand guard here, where all the danger lay. You shall not do it again."

"But, Frank, it is all I can do, you know. And, with the secret signal-bell arranged as we have it, so that I can sound it with my foot and no one be the wiser, my danger is not so great. See how quickly you came to my aid this time. No, the danger is not great, and now that I have regained my nerve I am ready to continue at my post."

"I think you are speaking more bravely than your heart feels, Myra," the man rejoined.

He was a young man, maybe thirty, of good looks and figure, but just now soiled with dirt, proof that he had dropped work to respond to the call.

"No, I am all right again now, Frank; can't you take my word for it? See; I do not look like a coward, do I? No; you go back to your work, and I will finish out the day's guard at the cabin."

"I will not allow it, Myra. I am done for this day. I must look and learn where these fellows have gone to, and then we must take such measures as we can for our protection against the invasion that is now sure to come. Oh! that we might have had a few months more in secret!"

He, too, was armed with a rifle, and holding it ready for instant use he advanced along the pass in the direction the horsemen had gone.

At the end of about twenty minutes he returned, his face wearing a lighter look than when he had set forth.

"Have they gone, then?" the young woman asked.

"Yes, dear wife," was the cheery response; "they have taken themselves off, beyond doubt."

"Then we are safe, for a time, at least. I am glad I was able to defy them, but it took all the courage I could bring to bear to do it. What are we to do now? You said you would work no more."

"Let's go to the cabin. If they return we will have warning of it."

Stooping, the young gold-seeker took up the end of a piece of wire that lay along the ground, and stretching it across the trail, made it fast over a ring that was there to receive it.

"There," he said, "they cannot return without our knowing it, and together at the cabin we can give them a warm reception, I think. Come on. By the way, did the fellows let out their names?"

"One was called Spotted Tiger, the other Giant Jack."

"Spotted Tiger? That is a strange enough name, I must say. Was he— But, you did say so—that he was spotted like a snake."

The young woman explained as they walked along through the pass, and by the time she finished her story they came out into a beautiful pocket, where stood a cabin right at the entrance.

The place looked a veritable Eden. It was sunny and warm, flowers bloomed in profusion, the grass was rich and thick, and a creek wound its way along through the southern half.

Closed in completely with rocky walls, save the narrow pass we have seen, it was a place where a few men might defy a host. And on the northern side, where a sharp rock ledge stood out, a drift had been opened.

This, then, was the secret the young woman had been guarding. The young man was a gold-seeker; he had found a rich vein, and had been delving hard to wrest a fortune from the find before it was discovered by others and a stampede to the little mountain pocket begun.

CHAPTER II.

THE INVADERS COME.

SUCH was the simple story of the pocket which this couple, man and wife, had named Rose Dell.

Frank Westley, a young mineralogist, traveling for his health in the far West, had been taken with the "gold fever," and had made up his mind to show the native prospectors that they did not know it all.

With his "book" knowledge, as they called it out there, and the practical knowledge added to that by close observation during a couple of years of wandering around from camp to camp while in quest of health, he was better equipped than any man with whom he had come in contact.

He had found health, and not only that, but a loving wife who was now his "pard" in the truest sense. Myra Treatman, whose acquaintance he had made in one of the Western mining "cities," was the daughter of a physician who had come to the West with the same object in view that had brought young Westley there; but who had been less fortunate in his seeking.

Frank and Myra had loved each other at sight, and after a short acquaintance they were married and she accompanied him on his further wanderings, now in search of a "find" that would satisfy his prospector's ambition and at the same time give him the wealth he desired to accumulate before he returned to his native eastern city.

Finally their wanderings discovered to them this beautiful little mountain pocket, and at sight of it Frank had declared his belief that gold was there. And, he set about proving it.

He found it a richer "strike" than he had ever dreamed of making, almost, and the couple resolved upon staying right there till they had gained a fortune.

They laid in a store of provisions, and returning, Frank built a rude cabin for their shelter during their stay.

Some months they had been there, at the time of which our opening chapter treats, and it had been their intention to fill out the year, at least, at the end of which time they would be rich enough to be independent while they lived.

Now, however, the forerunner of trouble had come, and the worst was feared. They were likely not only to lose all they had gained, but their mine as well. Thus far the claim had not been entered. Westley knew that to do so would be to disclose the secret, and in less than a week he would have more adventurers there than the pocket could contain.

If he could work it in secret till he had taken out a fortune, then he could file his claim to the mine, and if a stampede was made it could not then do him any harm, even if he was ousted temporarily from his possession; for, he would have already made his fortune, and would be reasonably sure of getting hold of the mine again in the course of time. And, there had been a prospect of his succeeding, till now, when trouble might be expected.

"Well, Myra," Frank said, when they reached the cabin, "what is going to be done?"

"I wish I knew what to say, Frank," was the response.

"Advise me, anyhow."

"Well, I would say hide what you have dug, so that it cannot be discovered, and let us keep right on. They may come and wrest the mine from us, but it is not likely they will do us harm."

"And then what?"

"There will be some chance to get away, at some time or other. We certainly have no means of taking it now, with no animal to carry it. We can hide it well, and then let Providence take care of us and it. This is the best I can advise you; you know I do not know much."

"I see but one flaw in your plan, Myra."

"And what is that?"

"They will know I have not been here without having something to show for it, and they may hold us and force us to reveal the hiding place to them."

"Then let us hide it and get away immediately, record our claim to the pocket, and then come back again with force enough to seize the place and hold it. I suppose that is wild, however."

"Little wife, we are in a dilemma. If we go out they can hold us out. If we stay, it is just possible that we may be able to hold them out. Not for all time, of course, but long enough to force them to terms. If they are honest men they will acknowledge our right to the Myra Mine at least."

"Well, your judgment must guide us, Frank. The first thing to be done, though, must be to *cache* our little fortune securely. We may be able to do that before they get back, if we make haste."

The work was begun from that moment, and in a couple of days it had been done thoroughly.

Their treasure had been stored away in a hiding-place which they deemed secure.

When the invaders came, as come they did not a great while later, it was by night.

The occupants of the little cabin heard the alarm-bell ring, and sprung to the defense of their claim, but the invaders were coming with a rush, determined to carry all before them, and were in the pocket in a body almost before action could have been taken, even had there been a score of men to defend the pass.

It was a moonlight night, and Myra Westley recognized at a glance as the leaders of the invading party the Spotted Tiger and Giant Jack.

"Whoop!" the Spotted Tiger yelled, firing off his revolvers to celebrate his victory, as it were. "Hyer we ar', as we said we'd be, an' what ar' ye goin' to do about it?"

"That's what's ther matter!" shouted Giant Jack. "We s'pected somethin' of this kind, we did, an' we made up our minds ef thar was a find hid hyer we was goin' to have a hand in it, an' hyer we be! Come out an' show yerselves, citerzens, till we size ye up."

"You see all there are of us," spoke up Frank Westley, in fearless tone, as he stood just in advance of Myra before their cabin door.

"Ye don't mean ter say you two is all!"

"There is not another soul here besides us, sir."

"Then et looks as if we have taken ther place, don't et? 'Pears to me et do."

"We are certainly in your hands, that I must admit," rejoined Frank, fearlessly. "That is to say, the pocket is."

"Wull, what hev ye got hyer, anyhow, young feller?" demanded Giant Jack. "Is et a rich strike what you have been workin' all to yerself?"

"You have guessed it."

"And does it pay big?"

"It is a paying claim. It is mine, of course; found, located and opened by me. If you are honest men you will not try to jump it."

"Honest be darn! We ar' hyer to make the stuff, we ar', and if you have opened a paying streak, so much the better. Git back into your cabin thar till daylight, an' then we'll talk biz."

There appeared to be at least twenty of

the band, most of whom were almost as evil in looks as the Spotted Tiger and Giant Jack.

Westley accepted the situation as cheerfully as possible, and withdrew within the cabin and secured the door.

There was no more sleep for either him or his wife that night, needless to say.

At an early hour the invaders were astir, and a call was made for Westley and his wife to come forth.

They had already breakfasted, and when they appeared, each had a rifle in hand and a revolver in sight. They were prepared to fight if it came to that, large as the odds against them.

"Well, boy an' gal," greeted the Spotted Tiger, "we hev sized up this hyer place of yours, an' it's a likely spot."

"Yes, it is a rich place, no use denying it," Westley admitted. "What terms do you feel disposed to make with us if we let you remain here and share the pocket with us?"

"Ef ye let us remain hyer? Haw! haw! Wull, that 'ar's good, that is. Why, ye young snipper-snapper ye, ain't we hyer all ready, an' in full possession? What more could we ask? I reckon ther boot is on t'other hoof, ain't et? Ye mean what is ther terms we'll low you."

"Then you mean to jump my claim, regardless of my rights to the mine, and not only the mine but the pocket as well?"

"Ther jump has been taken a'ready, young feller," here put in Giant Jack. "We ar' boss of the camp now, an' we have been talkin' et all over an' we'll tell ye what our terms will be ef we let ye stay hyer. Do ye git on to that? Spotted Tiger, you jes' tell him what ther conditions ar', an' we'll see what he has ter say fer himself on ther p'int."

"Rascals that you are!" cried Frank, in anger. "It is lucky for us that we have already disposed of most of our gold, or you would no doubt demand that, too. I will hear what your *terms*, as you call them, are."

"Cuss ther luck!" growled Giant Jack, "he has sent away most of his dust, an' our haul is that much ther less."

"He didn't say he'd sent it away," disputed the Spotted Tiger.

"You will not find it here," Westley declared.

"Wal, do ye want to hear ther terms we'll give ye?" the Spotted Tiger passed over. "Then hyer 'em is: We will give ye share an' share alike with us in ther mine, and your woman hyer is ter do ther cookin' fer ther camp. How does that ar' hit ye?"

"You infernal scamp!" the young gold-seeker cried, hotly. "Such a proposition is worse than an insult. Rather than accept such terms, we will go away and let you remain in full possession."

"Ye had better have a keer how ye sling yer pet names 'round hyar," the Spotted Tiger warned. "Et will be as *we* say whether ye go away or not."

"What! Do you mean to say you would try to hold us against our will?"

"Et shall be as ther boys say 'bout that. What do ye say to et, pards? Ar' we goin' ter let 'em move out?"

"We want a woman ter cook an' wash fer us, that's a straight deal, an' as long as we hev got one hyer I'm in favor of holdin' on to her," spoke Giant Jack.

"That's what's ther matter," chorused the crowd.

"And do you think a woman like my wife could cook and wash for a score?" the gold-seeker cried, boiling with indignation. "If she could, do you imagine I would allow it?"

"How could ye help yerself?"

"I could, and would, take her life, if it came to that."

"Bah! Talk is cheap. Ef ye say much

"we'll make yer wife a widdy, and then we'll see what's what."

"Do not anger them, Frank," the young wife cautioned. "I will undertake to do anything, for your sake. Do not anger them against us."

"Hear what ther gal says?" cried Giant Jack. "She is willin', an' I guess that settles et; hey, Spotted Tiger?"

"I guess et does," the Tiger agreed. "You'll stay hyer, young feller, an' then we'll be sure of ye. We'll enlarge ther cabin an' make et our headquarters, an' your purty wife kin be chief cook—"

"You infernal scoundrel!" burst forth Westley, unable to contain himself longer. "You seem to overlook the fact that we have got the drop on you! Up with your hands, every man of you, or we'll see what damage a bullet will do in your vital parts! Up with them!"

With the words, man and wife raised their rifles to their shoulders, and the crowd was for the moment at their mercy.

But, they could not hope to overcome them; their only chance lay in taking advantage of the moment.

Would they be able to make good their escape.

CHAPTER III.

THE SPORT.

A LONE horseman was riding along at a lively canter on one of Arizona's highway trails.

He was a young man, seeming not over thirty years of age, of medium size but athletic build, with a pair of keen and flashing magnetic black eyes.

The horse he bestrode was a sleek, strong-limbed black, which appeared to glory in its strength, and which any one could see had in reserve a power of speed that few might surpass.

No stranger this horseman to us; it was Deadwood Dick, Jr.

Presently, turning a point in the trail, he came upon two travelers on foot, a man and a woman, going in the same direction as himself.

They were roughly clad, their garments showing evidences of hard wear and long service, and the man was carrying a pair of rifles upon his left shoulder while with his right arm he was half supporting the woman.

As they looked around, hearing the sound of the approaching horse, Deadwood Dick had a chance to see their faces.

The man, he saw, was bearded, and the woman was pale and evidently weak.

They drew aside out of the trail to allow the horseman to pass them, but as he came up with them Dick drew rein and stopped.

"Is your companion sick, sir?" he inquired of the man.

"She is just recovering from a very severe illness, sir," was the well-spoken response.

"Well, here; she must ride for a little way, at least," leaping lightly from the saddle as he spoke. "Black Eagle is perfectly gentle, lady, so you need not fear. It will rest me to stretch my legs."

The woman's eyes showed her gratitude, but she looked at her companion in an inquiring manner.

"Your offer is certainly a generous one, sir," spoke the man, "and under the circumstances I am loth to decline it; but, it will delay you on your journey. It was our intention to stop in a little while for our noonday rest, anyhow, so perhaps it will be as well—"

"Don't think of delaying me, sir," Dick interrupted, "for I have plenty of time at my command. Let me assist you in helping the lady to mount, and we will then talk as we walk along together. I feel an awakened interest in you, sir, for your language has

betrayed the fact that you are a gentleman, in temporary hard luck. Now, lady."

"You say the horse is perfectly gentle, sir?" the young woman asked, rather shy of the spirited animal.

"Perfectly gentle, I assure you. Were he not, I would not have you risk it. But, you need have no fear."

The woman accepted the offer and was lifted to the saddle, where, sitting sidewise, she was comfortably at rest after the long walk she had come.

"May I ask where you are going?" Dick inquired, as they started on.

"We are aiming for Bristol City, sir," was the answer.

"Bristol City?"

"Yes; are you going there?"

"I am. The fact is, there is my home."

"Ah! this is fortunate. Do you know Mr. Bristol?"

"I have some acquaintance with him," Dick answered, smiling.

"He is the detective, better known as Deadwood Dick, Junior, I believe."

"Yes, so he is known, sir. Are you going to Bristol City for the purpose of seeing him?"

"Such is my object in going there, sir. Can you tell me whether I shall find him at home? But, you can hardly know."

"On the contrary, I do know. He is not at home at present, sir, but, will be there by the time you arrive, if nothing happens. The truth is, I am he."

"What!" in greatest amaze. "You Deadwood Dick?"

"Yes; I am Dick Bristol."

"Then let me have the honor of shaking hands with you. You, of all men, are the person I most desired to see."

Dick gave his hand, and they shook hands warmly.

"My name, sir," the foot-traveler then said, "is Frank Westley. I was going to your city to see if I could not get you to assist me in recovering a claim that has been wrested from me by force."

"Well, that comes right in my line of work, sir," Dick freely answered. "I will hear your story, and if you satisfy me that you are in the right in the matter, I will do what I can for you. If your cause is all right, I will chip in with you and try to win your case."

"You will not doubt the justice of my cause when you have heard, sir."

"Then let me hear as we journey along."

Thereupon the young gold-seeker told his story, beginning with the facts which have already been made known to the reader, and from the point where the preceding chapter left him he continued:

"Having the drop on them, for the moment, we had the best of the situation, and we did not hesitate to take advantage of it. Warning them not to move, not a man of them, we walked backward into the narrow pass, and making our way through with all haste, made good our escape."

"The knaves!" cried Dick. "We'll see whether they will wrest that claim out of your hands or not. But, go on, Mr. Westley. You say this took place some time ago, I believe?"

"It is now more than three months ago, sir. The excitement and exposure threw my wife into a fever, and for weeks her life hung in the balance. I could not leave her, and having no animal, could not move her, so I could only watch over her and pray that her life might be spared. At last she began to recover, and now, though she is very weak, she is gaining strength daily."

"You have been greatly wronged, sir, and I will do all in my power to right it for you. You said you cached your gold, I believe."

"Yes."

"Do you think it is secure from discovery?"

"Yes, I think it is. Still, it is not in an impossible place, and it may be gone ere this."

"And you could find the place easily enough—that is, without drawing attention, if we could gain admittance to the camp in disguise?"

"Oh, yes; I could do that easily enough. But, the trouble will be about getting it to the pocket. There is only one way, the narrow pass I have told you about, and five men could hold that against a host."

"That is bad. That is the worst feature of the problem. If we could get into the place freely, and out again, we might plan to carry off the treasure for you, if it is still where you left it. A little spy work will have to be done to learn the fact."

"Would it do to go to the hiding-place, without being prepared to take it away?"

"The thought came to me at the same time it came to you, evidently. No, it would not do, for, if discovered, that would spoil the chances of getting it. By the way, how much is there of it?"

"Quite a bulk, for it is in the rough. It is about all two men would want to lift, if it were in a chest or some similar receptacle."

"When we go there we must prepare to remove it. We will take a wagon and a big chest if one is to be had. One can be made, at short notice, anyhow, so it can be counted on."

"We had to leave everything we possessed in the world," the woman here put in her voice.

"Everything save our weapons and the clothes we had on," added the man. "I did not dare risk staying there another minute, for my wife's sake."

"You did wisely," Dick approved. "They would probably have put you out of the way, and your wife would have been a worse than slave among them. I have heard of this Spotted Tiger."

"A hideous creature!" Mrs. Westley exclaimed.

"I can imagine he must be. But, we will not let his face scare us any, I venture to say."

On the following day the trio entered Bristol City.

Deadwood Dick had camped with the Westleys over night, although but for meeting them he might have reached home the same day.

Mrs. Westley was taken at once to Dick's roomy cottage, where she was cared for by Mrs. Bristol—"Kodak Kate"—in the best possible manner, while Dick and Westley set about the business in hand.

By night everything had been arranged, and the start was to be made on the following morning.

That evening came a messenger to Bristol City, bearing a communication from the Governor of the Territory for Deadwood Dick.

The word was brought to Dick, and he received the man at his house.

"You have a message for me, I am told," he said, when he had given the man a cordial greeting.

"Yes, but not a written one, sir," was the response. "The governor feared that I might not reach here in safety, and such a message if found might hinder your work upon a case he desires you to take."

"I see. Let me have the story, then."

"Down in the mountains to the southwest, sir, a rich discovery has been made, according to all accounts, but the find is held by a horde of outlaws, supposed to be, who will not admit honest men into the valley where the gold is."

"And the governor wants me to go and open it up?"

"That is a part of it, sir, but not all. It

is believed that a murderer is harbored there, and the governor wants him."

"What is his name?"

"He is called Giant Jack."

"Ha! What is the name of this place you speak of?"

"It has come to be called Hard Hole. We do not know any other name for it now, and I guess that name fits it well."

"A good name for it, no doubt. A mild name, too, as names go out this way, sometimes. If it is the place I think it is, I am going there to-morrow in the interest of the original discoverer of the find."

"The governor will be glad to hear that. He has a requisition for this murderer, from California, and hoped you could take hold of the case at once."

"You did not bring the papers, then?"

"No; he said you could operate without as long as you knew the man. I can give you a description of him."

"Do so."

The description was given, briefly and to the point, and it fitted well the Giant Jack who had been described by Westley.

"I think I know something about the man," said Dick, "and you may say to the governor that I will hunt him out if he is to be found, and I think I can put my hands on him. It may take a little time, for these outlaws hold the best hand there and can hold the place against an army, if they are determined and have anything like government in their stronghold."

CHAPTER IV.

FOES IN THE FIELD.

A TERRIBLE place is deserving of a terrible name, and when a horde of villains of the worst type select a name for their stronghold it is not likely to be a saintly appellation.

So it was with this beautiful mountain pocket which had been wrested from the hand of its rightful possessor. Instead of Rose Dell, the name that had been given it by Myra Westley, it had come to be called "Hard Hole." And the place deserved the name or even worse.

A camp had sprung up, by this time, and there was a population of at least a hundred souls, with not a single honest man among the lot.

They were villains of every stripe and grade, "worse, worsen and worstest," as a certain adept scholar once put it.

At the head was the Spotted Tiger, with Giant Jack as second in command.

These did not reign because it was the will and pleasure of the band, exactly, but because they were, personally, the two most powerful villains of the lot.

Their presence had marred the natural beauty of the pocket to a great extent, for they cared nothing for that. Holes had been made everywhere in quest of new veins of the precious metal.

And, too, several had been discovered and were being worked with a certain feverish degree of activity.

But, all the digging had not been made in the hunt for new leads, for it had come to be the fixed belief in the minds of the Spotted Tiger and Giant Jack that the original discoverer had taken nothing out of the Dell, but had *cached* his gold somewhere within the inclosing walls, and according to the richness of the mine he had been working, and the length of time he had been there, which could be fixed pretty accurately by other signs, he must have taken out a snug fortune.

Then, digging in a certain place they had found where digging had been done before, and discovered the carcass of a horse that had been there for some months at the least. Hence, they had been there without means for transporting any heavy burden out of the pocket.

Again, they had been keeping their find

a close secret, and the amount of their supplies on hand, and the signs of what they had had at the beginning, indicated that they had not been away from the place for months—at any rate not since the misfortune of losing their horse. Taking all things together, it was believed that the gold they had mined was still there.

"I tell ye what et is," the Spotted Tiger had proclaimed, "that 'ar gold is hyer, som'rs, and et has got to be found. To the feller what finds it a double share will be given. Hustle, now, you galoots, and bring et to light!"

And they had hustled, to a man, putting in their spare time in hunting for it with a will.

So, the pocket had been torn up almost from end to end with spade and pick, in search of the hidden treasure that was supposed to be almost within their easy grasp, could they only get the clue to the hiding-place.

Now, however, the search had been about given over, since it did not appear likely that it would ever be found.

"Let us oncet git holt of that feller," threatened Giant Jack, "an' we'll make him show us whar et is, if we have to torture him to make him tell. He'll be back some time, ef he did leave the stuff hyer, an' ef he does come we'll know fer sure what he has come fer. That gold is ourn by all the rights of persession—ef we kin only git our grip onto et."

And that was the sentiment of the whole camp.

It was late on a pleasant afternoon that one of the outer guardsmen came running into the camp with alarm.

"Wull, what's ther matter?" demanded the Spotted Tiger.

"Thar's a hull stampede out thar wantin' to come in hyar," the guardsman reported.

"That's all right; you know what to tell 'em, don't ye? They can't come in, and the sooner they mosey along ther better et will be fer their health. Go back an' tell 'em that."

"That's what I done, Captain Tiger, but they say they ar' comin' in anyhow, an' I hev come fer you."

"Comin' in anyhow, be they? Wull, I guess we'll see 'bout that! Come on, Giant, an' we'll walk out thar an' see whether they'll move on or not. Call half a dozen of ther boys."

The headquarters of the horde was at the entrance to the pocket, in the cabin that had been built by the original proprietor, and which had now been enlarged.

On the side facing the pass it had been doubly logged, and it was a fort on a small scale.

There were loopholes, and a dozen men within could hold a hundred out of the pocket. In fact, with the fort properly manned and managed, entrance to the pocket was almost out of the question.

"How many is thar of 'em?" asked the Spotted Tiger.

"'Bout twenty, I should say," the guardsman answered.

"An' how ar' they fixed?"

"Bang up. Every man has got a hoss, an' they have pack-mules besides, and there is an open wagon with a big box in et."

"Looks as if they have come to stay, that's a fact. But they can't camp hyer, an' we may as well have et out with 'em first as last. Come along, pards, and we'll see."

The guardsman led the way out, the Spotted Tiger and Giant Jack following close after him, half a dozen or so others bringing up the rear.

It was not a great way to the place where the pass widened, but from there to the outer end was quite a distance.

There, at the outer end, it opened upon a plain, or mountain meadow, so to call it.

Across the pass there had been built a rude

wall of stones and bowlders, behind which a few men could hold the pass against big odds, and there the outlaws had been keeping a constant guard.

Beyond, a little distance out upon the plain, was a clump of trees, and it was there the party of prospectors had camped.

The Spotted Tiger and Giant Jack took a good survey of them before speaking their thoughts.

"What d'ye think?" asked Giant Jack.

"I think they mean business, an' so will we," the Tiger growled.

"You bet we will! There will be less of 'em before they git into our camp, I'm guessin'."

There were tracks beyond the stone wall, showing that the party had come close to the pass before going into camp. The trees were about five hundred yards away.

"Who is their captain?" asked Spotted Tiger.

"He's a broad-shouldered feller, 'bout middlin' height, wi' a close black whiskers. Thar, thar he is now, walkin' 'round ther wagon."

A man had just appeared in sight, and reaching the rear of the wagon, stopped and looked toward the pass.

"Hullo!" the Spotted Tiger called.

The answer came back, as quickly as the distance would admit of, and the Tiger invited him to come forward for a parley.

The man strode to where a black horse was tethered, loosed him and vaulted lightly into the saddle, and in a few moments was within a hundred feet of the stone wall.

He came with a handkerchief displayed as a flag of truce.

"That's a-plenty clost enough," the Spotted Tiger sung out. "Who ar' ye, an' what do ye want hyer?"

"We are a party under the guidance of one Frank Westley, owner of this place you have jumped, and we are here for the purpose of retaking it for him. Are you disposed to make terms with us?"

"Haw! haw! Make terms wi' you? Wull, not this year, I reckon, Mister Man. We have got ther camp an' we ar' goin' to hold it, you bet. What kin ye do about et, I'd like ter know? What's more, we warn ye to git up an' git out of hyer while ye ar' in good health."

"Just what we do not intend to do. If you will not make terms with us, we are going to camp here until we starve ye into submission, that is all. We know you cannot get out or in except by this pass."

"Ho! That's yer game, is et? Wull, now, thar may be two sides to this hyer question."

"There generally are two sides to a question."

"An' this hyer is ours: Ef you ain't out an' away from hyer by daylight, we ar' comin' out thar an' sweep ye off ther face of ther y'arth. Do ye savvy what I'm shoutin'?"

"You may find us a tough gang to run up against, my good man."

"Don't ye good man me, fer I'm a mighty bad one, as you ar' likely to l'arn ef ye monkey around hyer. We don't keer how tough ye ar', we have got men five to one against ye, an' we think we kin make ye hustle."

"All right, if we understand each other there is nothing more to be said, I imagine. You go back to your rascally crew and prepare for a siege, for that is what it is going to be. You are in a trap, as we well know, and if we cannot get in, neither can you get out."

"You might be foolin' yerself on that 'ar p'int," sung out Giant Jack.

"That will remain to be seen. If you have any other means of communication with the outer world you w'll have occasion to make use of it."

And with that as a parting remark the horseman wheeled suddenly and darted away

like the wind to his own little camp in the clump of cottonwoods, with several bullets singing after him from the cowardly villains behind the boulder wall.

"Wull, cuss his sassy tongue, anyhow!" cried the Spotted Tiger. "Sorry we didn't plug him when he was standin' thar. This hyer begins ter look like a little war, Giant."

"That's what et do, pardner," the giant agreed. "But, I guess we kin hold our own, ef they don't starve us out."

"An' that is our weak p'int, sure as ye live."

"But, we hev got ther odds in our favor, in ther way of numbers, an' mebbly we kin drive 'em off an' gobble up their pack-mules."

"That's ther idee, by thunder et is! Keep a close watch hyer, boys, an' I will double ther guard as soon's I git back to ther camp. Ef et's goin' ter be war, we'll make et war in earnest."

With that, the Spotted Tiger and Giant Jack set out to return to the camp, talking the situation over as they went along.

CHAPTER V.

THE SPOTTED TIGER'S DISCOVERY.

"We ar' on ther right track, now, Giant," the Spotted Tiger declared most emphatically.

"Et begins ter look ter me as if we was rats in a trap," the Giant returned with less of enthusiasm. "Thar ain't no other way out of this hole, that's ther fack, an' that feller knows et."

"You don't ketch on to what I mean."

"I guess I don't, fer I don't see nothin' ter crow about in ther prospeck ahead."

"Don't ye see one thing? Why, this feller has come back, ther rooster what we put out, ye know; an' don't that speak louder'n words fer a *cache* of gold hyer som'rs?"

"Blazes! That's ther very truth of et, I'm bettin'!"

"So I think, too. That's what ther wagon with ther box on et means; they hev come ter tote et off."

"You ar' right, ten to one ye ar'! But, ef ther *cache* is hyer in ther pocket I don't see clear how they ar' goin' to git at et, do you?"

"Wull, no, not 'zackly; but I reckon they think to freeze us out, or starve us out I mean, an' then they will step in an' take p'session an' have et all their own way."

"Guess we'll have somethin' ter say 'bout that."

"Wull, I think they'll find we will. Ef thar is a *cache* of gold hyer, we ar' goin' to find et!"

"We hev tried that, but didn't seem ter make anything out of et. How ar' we goin' about et? But, mebbe you hev some cute dodge in mind to trump their trick."

"No, I haven't, yet, but I'm goin' to think up one, ef I kin. If we kin let 'em think we hev weakened, or somethin' like that, an' let 'em git in hyer an' at work, an' then swoop down on 'em, we might snatch ther prize out of their hands."

Both were thoughtful for a time.

"I'll tell ye what!" suddenly cried the Spotted Tiger.

"Wull, what is et? Somethin' has hit ye, that I know 'thout askin'."

"Yes, you ar' right, pard. Here is a idee that has jest popped inter my headpiece. Couldn't we hide about forty, or even thirty good men hyar, with you or me as leader, an' then the rest of us go out an' make terms with 'em an' let 'em in?"

"That's ther tune, or sounds like et anyhow! Then when they'd marched in an' laid bare ther gold, out would come our men, an' in we would swoop and gobble up ther hull kit an' bilin' of 'em. You ar' a chief, Spotted Tiger, an' no mistake. But, ef et would work."

"That part of et is ter be seen."

They were now at the pocket, and found all their men gathered around the headquarters awaiting their return to learn what was up.

Spotted Tiger harangued them for a few moments, giving them the news and a shadow of the ideas he and Giant Jack had been trying to shape for the emergency, and the men pledged their support with a whoop.

Said one man:

"You ar' boss, Spotted Tiger, an' whatever you say do, that we does, you kin jes' bet; an' ef we don't knock 'em out et won't be our fault."

The captain of the horde appointed an additional guard for the entrance to the pass, and sent them out, and when they had gone he and the Giant entered the cabin.

There they talked over the situation at length, and finally agreed upon a plan of action.

They had come to the conclusion that the thing of most importance, first was to make sure of the wealth they had already taken from the pocket mines. If outgeneraled and ousted, it would not do to lose that.

Not that the Spotted Tiger and Giant Jack meant to make a fair divide among their followers, oh, no; but they intended to make a pretense of so doing. All the gold had been stored in bulk at headquarters, in charge of the captain and his second in command.

These two had taken good care that their portion did not fall behind the average, and had a separate treasure apart from the general store, made by their thieving from the whole. This was their secret, and now it was not a convenient one to be taken care of, for their part of the wealth was more than they could carry without being discovered.

They decided to *cache* it.

A meeting was called, all the gold brought forth—except the stolen portion—and it was divided up equally among all the men, to the satisfaction of all; and so divided, it could be carried with ease, each man having his portion.

By this time it was night, and while Giant Jack was out with the whole force at the end of the pass, for the purpose of preparing for a charge upon the little camp in the cottonwoods, the Spotted Tiger was intrusted with the important task of hiding the stealings.

It was a moonlight night, and when the others had gone out he stood at the door of the cabin headquarters and tried to think of a suitable place for his purpose. One had not previously been chosen.

"Darn me ef I ain't stumped," he soliloquized. "I must hide it in a place where Jack kin go an' see et fer himself, fer I can't think of playin' et on him—he is too big."

He looked up the pocket, down, and around on every hand.

"I wonder ef et wouldn't be a good idea," he mused further, "to take et up there in the rocks som'rs, an' hide et? Funny we never thought 'bout lookin' fer t'other feller's treasure up thar— By blazes! Wonder ef I hev stumbled onto anything here? I mean ter know."

He stepped out into the open and looked carefully around at the wall on all sides.

Above the cabin itself was the most rugged and ragged portion of all, and the place least open to access.

"That would be ther spot," he said to himself, "but how in misery could a feller ever git up there? That is what stumps me."

He looked, studying the situation well, and at last an idea came to him like a flash. It seemed strange that he had not thought of it before, it was so simple.

Considerably higher up was a ledge that could be gained by careful climbing from the Myra Mine. This ledge was further back than the main wall, and the cabins un-

der it could not be seen from its narrow face, owing to an outward swell of the rock below.

Could he not go along the trail, lower a rope from there out over the rounded face of the wall, and so let himself down to the bottom? It was a risk, and it meant hard work, but it was necessary to *cache* the treasure well while he was about it, and more important than that, he hope to find the treasure the rightful owner of the pocket was supposed to have hid away.

But for that hope, the hope of finding Westley's gold, he would have given up the idea, but that spurred him on.

There was plenty of rope at the mine, Westley having had a good supply of it when the invaders took possession and they bringing more, and the fact that Westley had had rope added strength to the Spotted Tiger's suspicion concerning where the gold had been stored.

He could but wonder why he had not thought of it before.

With all haste he went to the Myra Mine, gathered up rope enough for his purpose, and with it slung across his back made the perilous climb to the ledge above the cabin headquarters.

When he had reached what he considered to be about the right spot for his purpose, he looked around for a suitable projection to which to make the rope fast, and found one sooner than he had hoped for. Everything seemed to be working in his favor.

He took extra care to know that he was making the rope secure against all possibility of slipping, and when that had been done he coiled it carefully, making sure it was in good order, and when finally satisfied with it, flung the coil out over the bulge of rock and let it fall to the depths below. The preparatory steps had now been taken.

The point where he was working was just within the belt of shadow cast by the towering heights across the pass, and of this the Spotted Tiger was glad.

Should any one come back he would not be seen, if he was quiet and did not draw attention to himself.

Drawing his belt a notch tighter, and bracing his muscles and nerves for the undertaking, he laid hold upon the rope and boldly began the descent over the bowing slope to the point where the rope swung clear.

It was trying to his fingers, but they were tough and hardened and he could stand it.

He made no stop, but went down as quickly as safety would admit of, and in a brief time had passed over the ledge and begun the downward course.

Here the work was not so hard, since the rope swung close to the wall and he could use his feet as well as his hands, and as he went down he kept his eyes well open for whatever might come under their notice.

When a little more than half-way down an ejaculation of gratification escaped him.

He stopped, looked close, and exclaimed: "Discovered! by the roaring blazes! Who'd 'a' thought it. Here is the *cache* of gold, sure's I'm a livin' man!"

It was a little to his right, just where the moonlight fell full and strong, and there was no mistaking it. There it was, rich, yellow and plenteous! a bulk of the richest yield from the Myra Mine!

It was upon a shoulder of rock that seemed to have been fashioned by nature on purpose for this very use. The shoulder, to call it that, sloped backward and downward, and the latest rain had left water standing in the cavity, but above the water gleamed the gold.

"It is mine! it is mine!" the excited Tiger said to himself. "You git no share in this, hyer find, Giant Jack, and our little pinch o' stuff must be hid som'rs else. It's only a cent's worth, compared wi' the royal find. Gee-lory! but I'll be a dook, ef I kin only

git away with et. And I'll take keer that I do that, I'm bettin' high on't."

Without delay he climbed up to the top, not an easy task, but one which his excitement lent him strength to accomplish, and as soon as upon the ledge again he untied the rope and hastened back to the mine.

Leaving the rope, he hurried down and to the cabin, where the stolen gold yet awaited a hiding-place.

It mattered little where it was put now, so long as a pretense at hiding it was observed to satisfy Giant Jack. It was now under one of the bunks in a corner.

Bringing it forth, the Spotted Tiger laid hold upon a spade, and rushing out into the open, dug a hole in a place where one had been dug before in the search for treasure, and there buried it.

He had chosen wisely, in spite of his carelessness about it, for it was in a place not likely to be searched a second time. And, as soon as his work was done, he made haste to get out to the end of the pass to learn what was going on there. He had a new policy to work now.

CHAPTER VI.

PLANS ON BOTH SIDES.

THE reader must have guessed that the prospectors, so to call them, who had gone into camp just outside the pass that led into the pocket formerly called Rose Dell, were none other than Deadwood Dick and his party.

Indeed, Bristol had informed the Spotted Tiger who they were, and their object in coming. War had been declared, as it were, and it remained to be seen which side would win.

It was after supper in the camp that Dick called his men together for a talk over the situation.

"Well, boys, here we are," he said. "What is going to be done?"

"You are in command, sir," reminded Frank Westley. "Whatever you order will be carried out."

"Yes, I know; but, we must consider the situation well before we act. It is going to be a dangerous piece of work, unless handled just right."

"We ought to learn their strength, if possible."

"I agree with you in that."

"But, how is it going to be done?"

"A spy must be sent in, somehow," suggested Detective Hardy, now one of Dick's most trusted aids.

"Great hambone, yes!" cried Old Avalanche, who had insisted upon coming out with the party. "An', ef ye say so, I'm ther currogated can o' dynamite what'll undertake ther job."

"How would you get in, old man?" asked Dick.

"Wull, I dunno, 'zactly, but I'll git in somehow, ef you say ther word. Ef I only had Prudence Cordeliar and Florence Night-in-a-gale now, et would be a easy bit o' work ter wind up this whole business—"

"I wish I could have seen those remarkable animals, old man," observed Hardy, with a smile. "But, you haven't them, an' we must figure without them."

"Great currogated old hambone! Do ye mean ter doubt that I ever owned sech a pair of creetur's? 'Cause ef you do, by ther ring-twisted gyrashuns of discombobberated devastashuns I kin bring ther proof! Did I ever tell ye 'bout the time that my muel wiped out—"

"That story will have to stand over for this time, old friend," interrupted Deadwood Dick. "We must talk business now."

"An' that was what I was goin' to talk, confound ye, boy! Ther greatest bit o' real old business ye ever dreamed 'bout; great hambone, yes!"

"The question is, if a spy is to be sent into that camp how is he going to get in? And then, who is going to be the man to undertake the work? You, old friend, are too well-known."

"Ye think I'm too old, that's what et is; why don't ye say what ye mean?"

"A younger man must take the risk, old friend. You have played your part, and have enjoyed your share of dangers."

"Wull, do as you please. I know what's ther matter wi' you, you want all the fun yerself. Don't fergit that you hev a wife an' baby, Dicky, boy."

"No fear of my forgetting, old man. But, that does not stand in the way of my facing danger when it is to be faced. As I have a double object in going into the camp, I'm going to offer myself for the work."

"Then I go with you, sir," declared Westley.

"Why?"

"Because the danger is great, and I must share it since you are here on my behalf. You shall not take all the risks."

"I am here on business of my own as well. I must know whether Giant Jack is with this evil crew or not, and the only way to learn is to go in and find out. Must not alarm him, you know."

"Well, it is not for me to oppose you, but I shall remain here unwillingly if forced to do so."

"It is not likely that more than one man could get in, even if one can, and I have had more experience than you in such work. I think I will play the traitor to you and go over to their side."

"Thar's danger in et, boyee," reminded Old Avalanche.

"I'm well aware of it, old man, but danger has no terrors for me. I guess I can make it work."

"But, what ef they find ye out, and make et hot fer ye? We couldn't help ye even a little bit. Ye had better go a trifle slow, Dicky, boy."

"Dick, let me be the one to take the risk," spoke up Hardy. "I have no one to mourn for me if I go under. That is to say, no wife and child as you have. What do you say?"

"I say no to it," answered Dick. "You and Westley are both needed here, as are all the rest. I will go, and if I do not return in twenty-four hours you will then know that something has gone wrong, and you must then lay a plan for getting into the pocket."

"Why not lay that plan first, and all fight our way in together?"

"Just the object I have in view in going in there—to learn their force. They claim to have five men to one against us, and we must know whether they are lying or not."

"An' ef they won't give ye no show ter git out ergain, what good will yer spyin' do us?" demanded the old scout.

"In that case, our effort will have been a failure, and you will have to act without the knowledge. But, I think I can get in and out again all right, by playing the fine points well."

"Then that is your determination, sir?" asked Westley.

"It is."

"Nothing remains to be done, then, but to see you well off," said Hardy.

"I'll need no help, for I'll steal out of camp as though a traitor in fact, and will creep over to their lines and have a talk with them. Even if I do not get in I may learn something."

"Who will take command here?" asked Hardy.

"You, Dolan," was the reply.

The matter was talked over fully, more fully than need be quoted here, and at last Dick set forth from the camp.

Another plan had been arranged, in case this one should prove a failure, a plan that

was to stand second to the first, or to form a part of it if the first part miscarried.

When the Spotted Tiger reached the outer end of the pass he found Giant Jack and all his men there on guard.

The clump of cottonwoods seemed nearer by in the moonlight than by daylight, and by remaining quiet the men at the pass could hear the voices of those in the little camp.

Words, however, could not be made out, at that distance, spoken in the ordinary tone.

The Spotted Tiger drew Jack aside.

"It's all right," he announced.

"Found a good place for it, did ye?" the Giant inquired.

"Yes, bully place! Put it in a place where diggin' had been done fer et, an' no one will think ter look there."

"Et took ye long enough ter do et."

"Wull, did ye think I could do et in a minnit? Et took longer to decide on a place fer et than et did ter put et thar when ther place had been picked out."

"Yes, that's so, I s'pose."

"Wull, how's things hyer?"

"Ther same."

"No move has been made, hey?"

"None a tall, yit. They hev camped down ter stay, et 'pears."

"Well, I think we'll roust 'em out o' that 'fore mornin'. We hev enough men ter go out an' wipe 'em out."

"That is yer plan, then?"

"Et is. We'll wait till ther moon gits over ther hills an' throws a shadder over ther motte, an' then we'll go fer 'em."

"All right, ef you say so. We'll tell ther boys, an' have 'em all in good trim fer et. They won't want no better fun 'n that. We'll git quite a prize, too, fer they must have a good store o' grub."

"And we are short on that leg. Et wouldn't take 'em long to starve us out, as they threatened, ef they could hold us here. Come on, and I'll tell the men what is up, so every one can prime his weepins fer ther fray. We'll make 'em sick of this hyer job, you bet."

"But, say, Tiger."

"Wull?"

"We'd orter take that feller prisoner, ef we kin."

"What feller?"

"Ther one what was hyer when we kem. Mebby we kin make him disclose where his gold is hid."

"That's so. We'll try ter work that part of et in, ef we kin do et. Ef not, he will have ter take his pills with ther rest of 'em. Ther cleaner we wipe 'em out ther better et will be."

"I reckon that's so, too."

They went back to the stone barricade, where the horde was assembled.

"Boys," spoke the Spotted Tiger, loud enough for all to hear, at the same time standing up where all could see him, "we hev laid out a plan ter go by, now."

A little cheer greeted his words.

"Them fellers out thar hev declared their 'tention of starvin' us out of our camp, and you all know et wouldn't take 'em long ter do et, ef they could hold us in hyer like a passel o' rats. Now, I think we kin show 'em a trick wu'th two o' that."

This time a cheer that was a little louder than before.

"Not too much noise, or they will s'peck somethin'," the Tiger cautioned. "I will tell ye what ther skeem is, an' see what ye think of et. When ther moon gits down so's et will be dark out thar, then we will slip out of hyer an' swoop down on 'em an' wipe 'em clean out."

In spite of the caution this was cheered louder than anything before it had been.

"They hev hosses and rations out thar, an' that's jest what we want hyer. I tell ye et will be a big thing, ef we kin only carry et out an' not let 'em s'peck et till

et happens. And ther Giant hyer thinks et would be a good trick ter git holt o' that feller Westley an' make him disclose whar his gold is. We'll do that too, ef et kin be done."

That was all the Spotted Tiger had to say, and it looked as if the party in the cottonwoods was in danger.

But, outside the wall, lying under a bowlder, hearing it all, was Deadwood Dick himself!

The danger was at a discount, that was sure!

CHAPTER VII.

AT CROSS PURPOSES.

It was something like twenty minutes later when the outlaws behind their works heard a cautious voice calling to them from without.

Those doing actual guard duty were the first to hear it, and when they were sure they were not mistaken, one of their number responded, demanding to know who was there.

"I'm a deserter from t'other camp," came back the reply.

"Well, come out an' show yerself, then, till we kin size ye up," the guardsmen invited.

"An' git a bullet inter me? I guess not, not till I have ther promise of yer captain that he won't kill me on sight an' on s'picion. Jest call him up till I hold a chin wi' him."

"Whar be ye, anyhow?"

"Out hyer under a bowlder, to which I hev jest crawled. Thought I'd git my kerkess out o' sight 'fore I made known I was hyer."

Word was carried to the Spotted Tiger immediately, and he came promptly to the front to learn what the man wanted, who he was, and as much more about him as possible.

"Who ar' ye?" he called out.

"My name is Job Hyer," was the response.

"Wull, what ar' ye doin' hyer?" the Tiger demanded.

"I ain't doin' nothin' but layin' hyer," was the rejoinder.

"Well, come out an' show yerself, till we kin size ye up. What ye skulkin' fer?"

"Ar' you ther captain?"

"That's what I am."

"Will ye promise me ye won't shoot if I do come out?"

"Yes, we'll promise ye that, ef ye hev a straight story to tell. Out of thar with ye now."

There was silence for a second or so, and then a rough-looking customer made his appearance in the moonlight, holding up his hands.

"Ye see I mean ye fair," he said, "so don't take ther trouble ter shoot me, please. I think I kin put you boys onto a good thing ef ye will give me ther show."

"What is et?"

"Thar's a hidden treasure in that pocket o' yourn, an' I know whar to dig fer et. It's a—"

"You're a liar," accused the Spotted Tiger; and then he caught himself immediately. "That is ter say, et don't seem reasonable that Westley would trust anybody with that secret."

"That's jest et, he don't, nobody but his head man of ther party. I heerd him tellin' him all about et, an' he said he had papers ter prove whar et was, that is, a map of ther ground. An' what did I do but steal et. Do you come with me in what I'm tellin'?"

"We kin understand ye, yes."

"Well, ef ye will let me come in thar I'll give ye ther papers, ef ye will give me half of the gold when it's found."

"Let him come in, by all means," whispered Giant Jack."

"He's a darn liar, an' I know it, Giant," responded the Tiger in the same undertone.

"How do ye know et?"

"Wull, I think he is, anyhow."

The Tiger saw that he would have to be a great deal more guarded, unless he wanted to make his discovery known.

"What brought ye to us, then, feller?" he called out to the self-styled deserter.

"Why, I want a slice o' that treasure, an' as I can't git it alone I thought I'd see ef I couldn't come ter terms wi' you and give ye a share in et."

"Mebbe he does know somethin' about et," whispered the Giant. "If he does, et won't take long ter put him out of ther way, oncet we git our hands onto et. What say, Tiger?"

"You let me do this hyer, will ye?"

"Yas, go ahead."

"Say, you feller, how do we know but what you ar' a blame spy sent out from t'other side?"

"I'd be a fool ter poke my head inter a hole I couldn't git it out of again, now wouldn't I? I'm givin' you a straight deal, an' ef ye don't want ter take et up, no harm done."

"But, you will be out all around then, won't ye?"

"Job Hyer ain't no fool, you bet. If ye don't take me in I'll go back with ther camp, that's all."

"How strong is the camp out there?"

"'Bout twenty men, all told."

"Do they have a guard?"

"They will have, when they go to roost."

"Mebbe you will be one of them, eh?"

"Jest as mebbe as not."

"Shall we trust him a little, Giant?" the Tiger whispered.

"That's accordin' to what ye mean ter trust him with, I should say."

"Can't we ask him ter play false to ther camp an' fix et so we kin git in an' take 'em without a fight?"

"An' then ef he plays us false, as you think he ain't square, they would be posted on our 'tention t'ords 'em, an' be ready fer us. I don't think ye better had, pard."

"Then it's plain that you don't trust him no more'n I do, so I'll send him back."

"But," the Giant argued, "we orter know about that map he claims ter have."

"Say," the Tiger called out. "Show us that 'ar map, will ye?"

The man drew a paper from his pocket and held it up in the moonlight so that they could see it.

"I'm givin' ye a straight deal," he declared. "You kin take my word or not, jest as you please. But, let me know quick, so's I kin git back an' et not be knowed that I hev been out."

"Ask him what that 'ar wagon an' box is fer," whispered the Giant.

"That's so; glad ye 'minded me of et. Hey, what does yer folks out thar intend ter do wi' that wagon an' big box, feller?"

"Why, they hev brought that along ter tote off ther gold in. I tell ye et is a big fortune, an' ye may be missin' et ef ye don't take up my offer. I'm anxious ter git ahead of 'em."

"Well, we ain't anxious ter hev ye, that's flat. Go back to your own camp, an' when we want ye we'll send fer ye."

"You're a fool!" growled the Giant, in undertone. "With that paper we might git at ther hull thing without no more trouble. Let him come in! We kin see that he never gits out again."

"Fool yourself," retorted the Spotted Tiger. "If we let him in, an' his paper is good fer anything, won't ther hull lot of our gang be onto et? Then what good would et do us? No, we'll wait till we swoop down on 'em an' carry off everything they've got, and then we kin search this feller when he's dead an' git ther paper."

This was not the Spotted Tiger's real object, but it answered his purpose. He was

afraid the paper would reveal to the Giant and the others the secret of which he had knowledge already, and which he was anxious to keep to himself.

"Wull, do as ye please," the Giant growled. "You ar' a-doin' et, not me. Go ahead with et."

"What ar' ye goin' ter do?" called out the man in the moonlight.

"Wait jest a minnit," responded the Spotted Tiger, and turning to the Giant he added:

"'Spose we give him a scare, an' ef he is a traitor that will give him away an' his own folks out thar will most likely hang him. We'll fire some shots over his head."

"Better fire 'em at him an' go out an' git that paper."

"No, no; that paper will keep. We'll get that later on, fer they won't destroy et; no fear of that."

"I'll tell ye what we ar' goin' ter do," the Tiger then called out. "We ar' goin' ter have nothin' ter do wi' you, so ye kin git back to yer camp as soon as ye want to. We don't want any more men in our band, an' as fer ther treasure, we'll git et sooner or later."

"All right; I won't force myself in on ye, so I'll sneak right back 'fore I am wanted. If I kin anytime do anything ter help ye out of a fix, let me know an' I will come over to your side. But, let me give ye a word of caution 'fore I go: Do not try to come out thar to whip ther boys, 'cause ye can't do et. They've got a couple o' Gatlin' guns 'they brought in that wagon."

"*Whew!*" whistled the Tiger and Giant Jack together.

"I only tell ye this ter show ye that I mean ye fair," the traitor added. "If they range 'em on ye an' open fire they will sweep ye off'n ther face of the earth as sure as ye live. If they git a foothold in that 'ar pass with 'em, they will git right on into ther pocket, an' ye can't stop 'em. So, take good care that they don't git past this hyer stone wall. That's all I have got ter say. I only tell ye fer yer own good."

With that he turned and walked away in the border of shadow along by the hills.

"Call him back, Tiger," the Giant now urged.

"Nary a call back!" was the refusal; the Tiger determined that a map of that secret cache should not fall into the hands of the Giant and the rest of the band if he could help it. "Fire after him, boys, but not to kill," he ordered. "Give him a good big scare."

A score of shots rung out spitefully, and a shout rose from behind the wall barricade.

"Hillo over thar!" yelled the Spotted Tiger. "Thar goes a traitor to yer camp! Ye had better ketch him an' hang him!"

"My curse upon ye!" cried the fugitive, as he ran with might to get out of range.

"What did ye want to go back on me fer, when I only meant ye fair? But, I'll git even."

Other shots answered him, and he got out of range as soon as possible.

"Hillo!" came a call from the other camp.

"Hillo to you!" the answer was sent back by the Spotted Tiger.

"What's all that row about? Was you calling out to us? What's the matter with you?"

"We have jest sent back a spy that kem over hyer an' tried ter git into our camp. You had better ketch and hang ther traitor."

No rejoinder was made, but loud talking could be heard, and a few minutes later horsemen were seen running this way and that about on the plain, in hunt of the missing man.

CHAPTER VIII.

GIANT JACK'S MOVE.

NEEDLESS to say the outlaws watched this proceeding with interest.

Among them there was a division of opinion as to whether or not the Spotted Tiger had acted wisely.

The majority were inclined to think he had not, for, if the fellow really had a map to the hiding-place of the gold, it was just what they wanted.

On the other hand, the Tiger declared he suspected a trick in the whole business, and was not going to lay open any chance for anything of that sort if he could help it.

Those who stood with him agreed that this was a wise stand to take in the matter, since they did not want to run chances of being ousted from the pocket.

"But, I tell ye what et is," declared the Giant. "Ef they have got Gatlin' guns, as that feller said, they have got us in a tight fix, for we can't hope ter do nothin' 'gin' them things."

"An' ef they haven't, et will prove ther feller a liar," the Spotted Tiger suggested.

"Yas, an' ef they have, et will prove that he told the truth," reminded the Giant.

"But, then, that will be too late, fer if they find him and he has been plannin' ter give 'em away, they will hang him."

"An' they ar' goin' to git him, onless he lays mighty low," another man here put in.

This looked pretty certain, for there were several of the mounted men, and they were covering the bottom in all directions toward the pass.

Presently one of them was heard to raise a shout, and all the others dashed in his direction.

"They hev nailed him!" cried the Spotted Tiger, excitedly.

"That's what they've done," agreed the Giant. "Now we'll mighty soon know what's what."

The horsemen were soon in a group, and a man was seen to get up from out of the grass among them, who was immediately seized.

There was loud talking, most of which could be plainly heard by the listening outlaws, and the impression was conveyed that this fellow had been suspected before and now was found out.

The horsemen returned to the motte, taking their man with them, and for a time all was still.

All things had worked together finely for the furthering of Deadwood Dick's daring undertaking, and now under cover of the trees the next moves in the play were being prepared.

The daring detective had given his men directions what to do, and, casting a look over toward the pass, having mounted upon the wagon with his trusty Hardy, Dick stepped into the big box and soon the heavy lid was closed down upon him.

What this strange move meant remains to be disclosed. That it was one of Deadwood Dick's dare-devil dodges all very well knew.

There were holes in the ends of the big box to admit air, so he was perfectly safe for any length of time, almost.

Horses were now put to the wagon, and a couple of objects that had been hastily fashioned to look like guns on wheels, from a distance, if covered, were loaded in, and the wagon was driven toward the pass.

The outlaws were looking on in wonderment.

The wagon was driven straight out to a point a certain distance from the pass on the north, where it stopped, and one of the objects was unloaded.

It now took several men to handle it, though only one had been necessary to lift it into the wagon under the trees. And when once on the ground it was covered with a piece of blanket.

Four men remained there with it, while the wagon went on to a point south of the pass, where the other was unloaded, and that was covered in like manner and four men left there. It was plain to the outlaws what was going on, now, and they were serious.

"Them's ther Gatlin' guns," declared

Giant Jack, "an' now ye kin see that feller told ther truth."

"That's what's ther matter," admitted the Spotted Tiger. "We ar' in a bad fix, fer sure, but we'll fight et out as long as we hev a leg to stand on."

"You was crazy when ye didn't take in that deserter; that's where you was off your level," growled the Giant. "Now they have got us in a tight place, with them ar' guns—a mighty tight pinch, or I'm a fool-sucker."

"They'd 'a' put 'em there anyhow, it's most likely. It's as broad as it is long. Hello! what's the wagon drivin' this way fer?"

"So et is! I give et up."

The wagon came on to a point midway between the two guns, where it came to a stop and a man called out:

"Hello, there, the pass!"

The response was given.

"Have you got plenty of rope there?"

"We have got some. What's wanted o' rope?"

"In this box is an accursed traitor, and if you will hang him for us you are welcome to him. What say?"

"We want him!" shouted Giant Jack, before the Spotted Tiger could respond.

"Leave yer box right thar, an' we'll come git him. Don't you say a word ag'in' et, Tiger," in lower tone, "or I'll clip yer claws fer ye. We want that feller alive, now that thar's a chance ter git him."

"You ar' a fool, that's what's ther matter wi' you," the Tiger growled.

"Yas, I know et, Tiger; I'm jest fool enough ter want ter git onto that 'ar cache o' gold that you would throw away. That's whar my foolishness lays. Don't you chip in hyer, now, or et won't be well fer ye."

"You talk as if you was captain of this hyer band—"

"I'll bet all ther men ar' on my side in this hyer question. Ef this feller has got papers showin' whar that gold is, we won't let ther chance git away from us ergain, you bet."

"That's et," agreed the men who stood near enough to hear. "We want that feller, Cap'n Tiger."

"An' mebbly he's a blame spy—"

"Let him be one," broke in the Giant. "Et won't take much trouble ter hang him, as soon as he's told us all he can about that gold. You kin bet we don't mean ter give him no share in et."

This was greeted with a cheer.

While this was being said the men out on the bottom were unloading the big box from the wagon, and now having disposed of it, one called out:

"Hello, outlaws!"

"Say yer say," Giant Jack shouted back.

"Here is the box, and if you will hang the man you will do us a great favor. If there is anything we can do for you in return, let us know."

"We'll tend ter him, an' don't you doubt et," assured the Giant. "Ef thar is one thing we hate wuss'n another et is a spy, an' we'll stretch him as high as a rope will yank him."

"Yas, you bet we will!" added the Spotted Tiger. "An' we'll stretch him a good deal higher'n that, ef we find that he is a spy sent here from your camp, an' this hyer is only a trick ter git him in. I hev my doubts about this purty piece of bizness."

"That need not trouble you a moment," came back the rejoinder. "Hang him, anyhow."

The men had now got upon the wagon again, and drove off in the direction of the cottonwoods, leaving the box there on the plain, unguarded!

But there were the two Gatling guns, supposed to be, and they had command of the mouth of the pass in such a way that if men left the barricade they could be mowed down.

The Giant thought of this.

"Hyer's a thorn in ther flesh, pards," he observed.

"What's that?" asked the Tiger. "Do ye begin ter see et as I do?"

"I see them 'ar guns out thar on ther plain, an' hang me ef I hanker ter go out from hyer."

"That's so; jigger me ef et ain't! Why, ef they opened fire on us we could never git back alive hyer in the world. They'd sweep us out o' time."

"I should smile if they wouldn't. Say, hillo, out thar!"

"Well, hello!"

"We want that 'ar box, but we ain't goin' out thar to git et while you fellers is by them 'ar guns."

"Then we reckon you'll have ter let et be, fer our orders is ter stay here and see that not a man of ye comes out of that 'ar trap ye ar' in. Don't reckon yer game will work."

"But that 'ar box and ther man in et is ourn."

The wagon going toward the motte was seen to stop, and a man stood up in it and called out:

"That part of it slipped our minds. You men there at the guns, retire and remain away from your pieces till they have come out and carried in the box. And if they do not come and get it in five minutes, turn your guns upon it and riddle it with bullets."

"All right, cap'n!"

"By blazes, but thar's no mistakin' that kind of a order!" cried Giant Jack to the Spotted Tiger.

"I begin ter guess you ar' right," the Tiger agreed. "An' now see hyer, my gallus Giant, I want ter have a word o' speak wi' you in private."

"Well, what is et?" stepping aside from the others.

"Suppose that feller has got papers on him that shows whar that gold is hid, I hope you ain't fool enough ter let ther hull band come in fer et."

"Do ye see any green in these hyer orbs o' mine, Tiger? Ef ye do, jest indercate et. Ef that paper shows whar that gold is, et will be fer you an' me ter find et."

"But, that will make trouble with ther boys."

"Wull, I dunno, I s'pose we'll have ter be guided by ther sarcumstances of ther case."

The wagon had now reached the motte again, the men were walking away from the guns, and the way was clear for the outlaws to sally out and bring in the coveted box.

The Spotted Tiger, forced into the thing against his will, selected six of his men for the business of going out for it, and they set forth, presently returning with it, when others assisted them in lifting it up over the barricade.

Then they opened it, and there within was a man, apparently having been jammed down into the box by main force, so cramped seemed his position, and it took two strong men to release him and get him out of his close quarters.

CHAPTER IX.

POINTS GAINED.

THE reader can readily understand that this was only a trick of Deadwood Dick's.

He had plenty of room, or at any rate enough room, when getting into the box, but now was wedged in so tightly that it was with difficulty he was taken out by force.

A little stiffening of his muscles had done it all. Had it been his desire, he could have made it next to impossible for them to remove him from his narrow prison. And when out, he could for a few moments barely stand.

"Curse them!" he muttered, "they shall pay for this!"

"So, you ar' the fellow what was out thar

"under ther bowlder, ar' ye?" demanded the Spotted Tiger.

"Yes, I'm that same feller," was the answer. "If you are goin' to hang me, as they said, all I ask is that you will let me have a word with 'em first, to let 'em know I have tricked 'em."

"How have ye tricked 'em?"

"They don't know I've stole their map."

"Let him have his say, then," advised the Giant.

With the Spotted Tiger the request of Giant Jack was a command, and he made response:

"All right, Jack; he kin say et."

The prisoner had now regained his strength, and mounting to the top of the stone barricade, he sung out:

"Hello, gold-hunters!"

"Well?" came back the shout.

"You would have done better ef ye had hanged me yerselves. Now I'm 'gainst ye from ther word Go."

There was a trivial response to that.

"That's all right," the prisoner shouted back again, "but whether they hang me or not, you have been dished out of that 'ar gold. Take a lookaround and see ef ye miss anything. Mebby somebody has lost a map, or somethin' of that kind. Ha! ha! ha!"

There was no immediate rejoinder, but a hum of excited talk reached the ears of the outlaws.

"That hits 'em whar they live," remarked the prisoner, with a careless laugh. "They thought they did a smart thing by fallin' onto me an' puttin' me in that 'ar box an' handin' me over ter you, but I guess they will see that they had the wrong pig by the ear that time. Job Hyer wasn't as much a fool as they thought him ter be. That makes 'em chin, don't et?"

In a few minutes a horseman was seen dashing out toward the barricade, waving a white rag as he came.

He did not come close up, but took a position between the two Gatling guns, so supposed to be, and called out from there for a hearing.

"What d'ye want?" demanded the Spotted Tiger.

"We will give you five hundred dollars cash for that prisoner back again, with all papers on him as found."

"Ha! ha! ha!" the prisoner himself laughed defiance. "You ar' too late, my respected cap'n. Thar will be a hangin' hyer shortly, in which I will figger conspicuous, I reckon, an' then these hyer gentlemen will have ther secret of ther *cache* of gold."

"Curse you for the thief you are!"

"That's all right, but that don't alter ther fack any. I'm hyer, an' so is ther paper, an' you ar' out."

"Well, curse you and all the rest, you are in a trap, and, even though you may have the secret of the hiding-place of the gold, you cannot get it out of that pocket, so we hold the best hand yet."

"Mebbe ye do. We'll see 'bout that 'ar, hoss. If these hyer fellows will take me in with 'em instead of hangin' me, I'll bet we will make you hustle tall ter keep us hyer. I know your weak p'int as well as your strong ones, and thar's a cool hundred of us if thar's one."

Thus did Dick, at once, give away the strength of the outlaw band, and they in their blindness never saw the point at all.

"We defy you!" was shouted back again.

"Do your worst, Job Hyer!"

The horseman turned and rode back.

"That's where we've got 'em, dang 'em!" the prisoner cried. "An' I'm glad of et, even ef ye do hang me, pard. If you'll spare my life, though, an' let me j'ine ye, I'll do that most willin', an' will only ask a fair share of ther treasure when we git holt of et. What do ye say?"

Dick had gained two points of his object

in coming there and taking such a risk of his life.

He had learned the strength of the outlaws, and he had already found his man, Giant Jack; better luck than he had looked for so soon. And, the first point had already been made known to his men.

"We says yes, ter that," sung out a dozen or so of the outlaws at once, in response to his question.

"Yes, we'll let ye live till we find ther treasure, anyhow; hey, Spotted Tiger?" supported Jack.

"I s'pose so, ef that's what ye all want. Still, a traitor ter one side might be a traitor to t'other side, ef he could, an' I sha'n't trust this feller a long ways."

"Ye don't need ter trust me any further 'n ye can see me," Mr. Hyer assured them.

"How is et ye ar' armed?" demanded the Tiger.

The prisoner had on a belt with a single revolver thrust in it, a singular equipment for a prisoner.

"They didn't take my weepin away from me," was the explanation offered. "I was jumped on an' jammed down inter that box without a chance ter speak or a chance ter tell 'em their mistake."

The others laughed as though they saw a joke.

"Well, we'll relieve ye of that popper, anyhow," said the Tiger. "Giant, you take charge of et, ef ye will."

The Giant took the weapon.

"An' now," he said, "perdoose that 'ar map ye talked about an' let us see what et's like."

"Ar' you ther captain?" the prisoner demanded.

"No, but I'm ther next in command, and et don't make no difference, anyhow, fur as you ar' consarned. Perdoose ther dockyment!"

"Yes, let's see et," supported the Tiger, since he could not do otherwise now.

He was in a feverish state to see it, too, for he could tell at a glance, with the knowledge he had, whether or not it was a map to the true hiding-place of the treasure.

The prisoner sat down and drew off one of his boots, and giving it a shake, out fell a folded paper.

"Hyer et is," he said. "Take et an' say what ye think of et. Et's no use me tryin' ter make terms wi' you 'bout et, I'll have ter take whatever terms ye are willin' ter 'low me. Ef et's hang, I'll have ter stand et, I s'pose."

The Spotted Tiger leaped forward and snatched it up eagerly, although the Giant was reaching forward for it.

"You ar' 'fraid I'll eat et, ain't ye?" Jack growled.

"I have ther first right, Giant, bein' captain of the band," the Tiger gave answer.

He unfolded the paper, and even in the strong moonlight a look of relief could be seen to appear upon his face.

It was noted both by Deadwood Dick and by Giant Jack, though with differing thoughts as to its cause, neither of which was near the truth.

Dick, on his part, read in the look the thought that at last the rascal held the clue to the hiding-place of the gold, proof that he had not already found it.

Giant Jack, from another point of view, believed the Tiger recognized the map as a genuine one of the valley pocket, and that the indicated *cache* was a spot that had not been searched.

But, the Spotted Tiger himself was the only one who could have explained, then, what had caused the expression of relief and satisfaction. It was that he saw at a glance that the map did *not* indicate the true position of the treasure spot in the pocket.

"I believe we've got et!" he cried.

"So do I," agreed the prisoner, so called, though he was as free as any of them, yet.

"Where is et?" asked the Giant.

"Can't tell, 'zackly, but it's some's 'bout half-way up ther pocket, with a good deal of figgerin' an' measurin' about et."

"No matter how much of that thar is, ef it is anywheres near the spot we'll turn up ther hull bottom but what we'll find et. Come on, an' let's go take a look over ther ground now."

"An' ye don't want ter ferget that we come in fer a share of et," one man of the band spoke up.

"We'll 'p'int six of us ter go with ye, I'm thinkin'," said another.

This was urged with a shout.

"Can't ye trust yer captain?" demanded the Spotted Tiger.

"Yas, whar we kin see him."

"And ther same with Giant Jack!"

"Yas, you bet et is."

The Tiger spoke to the Giant in whisper.

"We've got to keep favor with 'em," he said. "We'll have to take 'em in et with us, and try ter dump 'em afterwards."

"All right; I'm willin' since there don't seem ter be no way out of et, Tiger," he assured.

"Come on, then, a dozen of you, if you want to," the Tiger invited. "And the rest of you remain here on guard and see that no one steals a march on ye."

"Et's all up about attackin' their camp now, I reckon," suggested the Giant.

"Yas, that dog is dead. Them Gatlin' guns settled that 'ar' question fer us. We'll have ter outplay 'em at ticktacks, ef we beat 'em a tall. But, come on with ye."

So, up the pocket—or up to the pocket—they went, the Spotted Tiger, the prisoner, Giant Jack, and about a dozen others, and work was begun to locate the spot indicated on the map.

It proved a harder task than they had ever dreamed it would be. The map and the ground did not quite agree in measurement, somehow.

CHAPTER X.

MR. HYER'S CALL.

THEY "monkeyed" around there in the moonlight until after midnight, measuring and remeasuring, according to the map, but could get little satisfaction.

Taking it from one point on the map as the beginning, the end found them about in the middle of the little creek; while taking it from the other end as a starter, they finished half-way between the creek and the northern wall.

And there was something about this which they could not understand.

Far as they could see, they took the same number of paces each way each time, and yet there was this difference.

The Spotted Tiger, knowing what he did, was the first to tire of the farce, for such he knew it to be, and when they came again to the bank of the creek, with some paces further to cover, he said:

"Wull, fer one, I'm done fer to-night. Ther darn map ain't made out right, onless thar is a ketch about et that covers ther secret, an' I begin ter believe that is jest et. If the gold is buried out thar, in the middle of ther creek, thar is whar you will have ter dig to-morrow!"

"An' ef et ain't thar *whar* is et?" demanded the Giant.

"Give et up."

"This is wuss'n I thought et would be," ruminated Job Hyer, the prisoner, scratching his head. "I thort I had a cinch on ther secret, when I got holt o' this hyer paper."

"But, et seems ye hadn't. An', now that we hev tired of this fer ther night, I wonder ef we hadn't better see to ther business of hangin' you?"

It was the Spotted Tiger who offered the remark.

"If ye hang me now I'll think et's a dirty

mean trick," complained the prisoner, with a coolness that had to be admired.

His remark elicited a laugh from the dozen or so around, and the Giant made inquiry as to the point of objection the cool prisoner had raised. They wanted to know his reason.

"Why, after lettin' me work hyer with ye all this time, like ary beaver," he explained, "an' then ter hang me, is rough. Why didn't ye do et in ther first place, and so save me all that trouble? Et would be a scurvy trick, that I'm tellin' ye to your heads."

"But, we ain't no use fer ye," insisted the captain, "and ther band is big enough as et is. Besides, et will put ye out of yer misery."

"Wasn't aware that I was in any p'tic'lar misery."

"What do ye say to et, boys?"

"Hang him!"

"That seems ter be ther verdick," the Tiger informed, solemnly. "Do ye want a little time ter say yer kittenkasm 'fore ye go, prisoner?"

"No, I guess et wouldn't make any difference, now, about a little thing like that. If ye mean ter hang me thar's no use my kickin'; but I thought I'd let ye know what I think about et."

"Wull, you ar' a cool one," observed Giant Jack.

"Might as well be that as anything, I s'pose. But, ef ye mean business, go ahead with the funeral!"

"Say, et's a pity ter hang a galoot with a nerve like that 'ar," here put in one man of the party. "Better let him j'ine us, cap'n."

"Nerve?" questioned the prisoner, carelessly. "Whar do ye see nerve? Ef et's ter be hang, why hang et's ter be, and what would be ther use of my howlin' about et?"

"What do ye say, Giant Jack?" asked the Spotted Tiger.

"Et don't make no difference ter me, Tiger," was the reply. "We hev got the map, an' I reckon that is all ther use he kin be to us."

"'Bout bein' of use to ye, I am willin' ter do my little best ef ye ar' willin' ter give me a show fer my alley," the prisoner spoke up. "I ain't in no hurry to shuffle off."

"How fur could we trust ye?"

"Jest as fur as ye want to. Ef ye kept me in sight I think I kin say I'll be found trusty."

"I s'pose so. But, you, who was et ye stole this map from?"

"Ther feller what owned ther pocket when you kem and boosted him out of it."

"And is he the head of that party out there?"

"Yes; but he has a guide and friend with him that he trusts with 'most all of his biz."

"Well, we'll let you live the night out, anyhow. We'll go out again to the end of ther pass, and there I'll put you under charge of one of ther guardsmen to do dooty."

"Can't do et, so ye might jest as well finish me."

"Why can't ye do et?"

"Been up all day, after bein' awake 'most of last night, an' now it's midnight and I'm dyin' fer sleep."

"Then ye might as well put him ter sleep fer keeps, Tiger," suggested the Giant. "He kem to us a traitor and he might go from us a traitor jest ther same, ef he got ther chance."

"Don't see what I could trait on, from hyer," drawled Mr Hyer.

"And he'll be one ther less to share ther gold with when we do git holt of et," added the Spotted Tiger. "Git a rope, boys, and we'll finish him off ther same as his friends asked us ter do."

"So ye like to do dirty work fer yer enemies, do ye?" suggested the prisoner.

"Et don't make no diff what ye call et," retorted the Tiger. "All we wanted anyhow was ter git holt of that map, even ef et hasn't been of much use to us. So, et was only out of ther fryin'pan into ther fire, fer you."

"Well, all right, let's have et done with. Where is the tree?"

He looked around to find one.

"There's a rig up thar by headquarters that will answer ther purpose," said the captain. "We'll go up there."

"All right, I'm willing, seein' that I can't help myself, and I'm sleepy enough anyhow to go to sleep. Come on, and we'll go right up there. I'll save ye all the trouble I can."

And without further debate he set off in the direction of the headquarters cabin at the entrance of the pass.

The others followed after him, making various comments needless to quote, for the most part the men being in favor of sparing his life. But, for reasons of their own, the Spotted Tiger and the Giant were resolved upon disposing of him.

The Giant argued, privately, that maybe the fellow was holding back something, and the Tiger had a fear that maybe he *did* know the true hiding-place.

Mr. Hyer was first to reach the cabin, and when the others came up a few seconds behind him they found him leaning against the building.

"Get out your rope," he laconically drawled.

And the Giant brought it.

"Put in a slip."

It was put.

"An' now I want ter ask ye ef ye ain't ashamed of yerselves, ter hang a fellow that ain't done nothin' to ye?"

"Oh! that's stale, now. Lay onto him, men, and we'll fix him. No more foolin' about et, now."

"And I'll fix ther man what refuses," threatened the Giant.

This had more effect, really, than the captain's order, and the men moved sullenly forward upon the lone and apparently defenseless man.

But, immediately a change came over Mr. Hyer. He sprung erect, his right foot forward and his head thrown slightly back, while his fists were put up in true pugilistic fashion.

"This has gone about fur enough," he cried. "Ther man that comes within reach of these hyer thumpers goes down, and don't ye forgit et!"

"Haw! haw! haw!" laughed the Giant. "Mebby et would be *me*. I think I'll see ef et would."

He stepped boldly forward in advance of the other men.

Mr. Hyer allowed him to come close up, and just when the Giant reached out to deal him a smart slap, or take hold of him, whichever was his intention, out shot one of his fists.

Over went Giant Jack, as though he had been kicked by a mule at close range, to the amazement of all.

And, to complete the surprise, at the same time, as it seemed, a pair of flashing revolvers leaped into the fists of the sleepy Hyer!

"That's ther kind of a hairpin I am, when ye wake me up!" he cried. "You wouldn't have me fer yer friend, so take me fer yer enemy and see what you'll do about et."

He had them covered in the finest way.

"*Hang him!*" thundered the Giant, as he gathered himself up in haste from out the dust. "String him right up!"

"Nothin' of that sort this evenin', ef you please," said the late prisoner. "Put up your hands, every mother's son of you! This place is called Hard Hole, and I guess it is, too; but, it isn't hard enough to get away with yours truly."

"Who in blazes are you!" cried the Giant.

"Yas, who be ye?" the Tiger.

"I'm Job Hyer, right hyer every time, you bet! Now, what terms are you willin' to make with me? I object to being hanged just to amuse such a measley set of rascals as you are."

There was something about the order that had caused the wretches to obey before they realized it, and now they were in a trap indeed.

Their hands were up, and there were two deadly revolvers aimed at their heads, ready for action.

"What terms do ye demand?" asked the Spotted Tiger.

"Nothing but my life. Let me out of here, and that will make it all right between us."

The dialect was gone, as he said that, and the Giant was quick to note it, for immediately he exclaimed:

"Nary a let go!"

"Might as well," said the Tiger. "He's got us foul."

"Not half as foul as we have got him. 'Sides, he ain't what he seemed ter be. Didn't ye notice how he talked, jest then?"

"I notice that he's got ther drop on us, an' that it's only a touch of his finger whether we be or whether we ain't. I'm of ther honest opine that common sense says let him go."

"Thank you!" said Dick. "I'm going, anyhow. File into that cabin, there, every man of you, and shut the door. Right about face, *march!*"

They turned, and at the same moment so did he, and ran for his life in the direction of the exit. The loop-holes had caught his attention for the present time, and he knew that the first man to enter the cabin would have his life at his own will and pleasure.

Deadwood Dick was in a desperate dilemma, now.

CHAPTER XI.

DICK MAKES DISCOVERIES.

Dick was allowed only a few seconds the start, for his steps were heard, of course, and as soon as the outlaws took in the situation they were after him immediately.

A swift runner, hower, Dick had covered some distance by that time, and a bend in the pass had carried him beyond danger of bullets for the time being. But, he was in a tight trap, and the yells of the enraged outlaws were wild and fierce as they dashed in pursuit.

Dick's thoughts flew more rapidly than his feet.

He had no doubt but that he would be able to pass the barricade, by shouting some deceptive words as he came up, but the other men would be right behind him, and he could be shot before he could get out of range.

His next thought was to hide somewhere and let his pursuers pass him, after which he could return to the pocket and seek escape by some other means. If he could have a little time he could effect a disguise that would enable him to mingle with the outlaws themselves till daylight at least.

With that thought came something that Frank Westley had told him about a place in the pass he had discovered.

At the point where it widened, under a projecting ledge, was an opening into which a man could slip, beyond which was a drop of about four feet. It was a place, too, that was not likely to be discovered without close search.

Westley had discovered it when he and his wife "pard" were putting up their signal bell, and it had been his intention to explore it further at some convenient time, but he had never found the time to do so. Dick resolved to find that place if he could and get into it.

When he came out into the wider part of the pass he slackened his pace, and groped

along to find the ledge that had been described to him.

He presently found it, and dropping down, pressed his body under it, when, of a sudden, he fell through and dropped to the bottom, escaping any injury further than a slight shock.

The next minute the Spotted Tiger and Giant Jack, with their men, dashed by, yelling wildly and fiercely, and their cries died away in the distance.

"That was a pretty narrow shave," said Dick to himself. "I knew it was taking a big risk to come here as I did, but I'm used to taking risks. However, I am not out of the woods yet."

When the Spotted Tiger and his gang reached the barricade, they came up with much whoop and halloo.

"Stop him!" they came yelling. "Stop ther p'izen cuss! Don't let him git by ye, an' ef he does, riddle him wi' bullets 'fore he git's out o' range! Make a porous plaster of him!"

"What's the matter?" demanded one of the chiefs of the guards. "What are ye yellin' so about? Who is et ye want stopped?"

"Ain't ye seen him?" cried the Tiger, coming up panting.

"No, seen nobody."

"Didn't he run out hyer?" from Giant Jack.

"Nary a run out. Nobody kem this way till you fellers kem yowlin' along enough ter scare the dickins."

"Then he's dodged us," declared the Tiger. "We must have him, ef et takes all night. He wasn't what he p'tended ter be, an' that's a sure thing, now. He was a blame spy!"

"You mean that feller what kem in ther box?"

"Yas, ther same."

And then was told what had taken place, when the whole horde of them became greatly excited.

"One thing is sure," declared the Spotted Tiger, "he can't git out of hyer onless he comes this way, so we hev got him anyhow. You boys wants ter keep up a good watch hyer."

"An' you bet we will. But, did ye find ther cache o' gold?"

"No, cuss ther luck. An', I begin ter think that map was only a sham, too. But, thar won't be any sham hangin' about et, ef we git hold of that cuss!"

That brought out a shout of approval.

"The jig is up, about makin' that attack on ther camp out thar, I s'pose," Giant Jack observed.

"Yas, clear up," agreed the Spotted Tiger. "We don't want no dose from them 'ar Gatlin' guns—leastways I don't, an' I think we'll have ter hold ther fort an' fight et out."

The men were now divided in two parties, the one to remain there on guard to defend the pass against attack, while the others set out to find the lost prisoner.

These provided themselves with lights, and they looked well along the pass as they returned to the the pocket, but nothing was seen of the missing man. He had given them the slip.

Believing, then, that he must be in the pocket, another guard was stationed at that end of the pass, while the remainder of the men carried on the search there.

Needless to say their prisoner was not found.

We now return to Dick.

After the men had gone by he began feeling around in his narrow stone place of retreat, to learn how large the place was.

He took several steps in the dark, with great caution, and found that the hole widened rapidly, until he believed he must be in a cavern of some extent.

"This won't do," he told himself, "this

groping around in the dark. I must have a light. But, how am I to get one— Ha! have I that candle yet?"

On the previous night he had had occasion to use a candle, doing something for his horse, and then had dropped it into the pocket of his jacket.

Yes, it was there yet! And a further search brought some matches to view, when he soon had a light.

He held his hat behind the candle, so that its light might not be seen from the pass through the opening by which he had got into the place, and looked around and about him.

Yes, he was in a cavern true enough. It reached upward and away until in one direction it was lost in distant blackness.

The floor was rough and scattered over with fragments left there by Nature when she had formed the chamber. The finishing hand of man had never been employed here, evidently.

Having taken his bearings, Dick walked away along the cavern wall, where the best footing was to be had, and was presently in the very bowels of the vast mountain, probably where man's foot had never before been set. The wild grandeur of the place charmed him.

"I wonder where I'm going?" he asked himself. "If I get lost in this hole, it won't be a very pleasant experience, I can well imagine. But, I'll take the risk of all that and press on and learn what I can of the cavern. It must have other openings somewhere, I imagine. If not, I shall have to get out the way I got in, and anyhow, it will serve me as a place to make up a disguise."

He came now to a point where there was a branching passway, it leading upward at a gentle angle, while the other, or main way, sloped downward.

Deciding that it was better to be going up than down, Dick turned aside into the narrow way and pressed on.

Needless to follow him step by step. He finally came to a spot where he felt a breath of warmer air upon his face, and looking about him caught a glimpse of the moonlight just ahead.

"Well, here I am," he mused; "but the question is, *where am I at?*"

Studying the footing for a moment, he put out his light and pressed on toward the opening through which he had caught the moonlight.

Reaching it, he found it to be nothing more than a hole, one through which a man might crawl, and putting out his head to look around he immediately recognized where he was.

Below, straight down, was the camp of Hard Hole, and the lights were seen moving this way and that in the pocket as the outlaws were looking for their prisoner.

"Ha! this is a discovery worth something!" Dick exclaimed. "If we don't circumvent you now, my daisies, it will be funny. But I don't see yet just how it is going to be done."

Studying the position of the opening well, he decided that it could not be discerned for what it was from the pocket bottom, and he believed it had never been discovered before.

At the opening was a growth of grass and ground blackberry vines, such as dotted the wall here and there wherever the dust of ages had deposited soil enough for support.

This grass and vines had never been disturbed, as was plain to be seen.

Satisfied, Dick drew back into the cavern and relighted his candle, preparatory to further exploration.

There was no other passage there save the one by which he had come, hence he had to go back that way, and in due time he came again to the juncture with the wider passage.

Turning into the wider pass, he pressed

on, using care not to come suddenly upon any chasm that might be in the way. Of these there were none, however, and finally he came to another branching passage, similar to the other but this time turning to the right.

* Dick stopped to think before deciding which way he should go.

At last he chose the broad way, since here for one reason, it presented the better footing of the two.

"It's the broad road that leads to destruction, I know," he mused; "but, it has the appearance of the easiest traveling, so I'll take my chances this way. If I get out, all right; if not, I'll come back."

This was a mistake, but of course he could not know it then.

He pressed forward, on and yet on, till it seemed as if the way was never ending. His candle, too, was burning low, and would not last him a great while longer.

"I've come so far," he mused, "and what's the sense of turning back now? The other passage may be worse. No, I must press on, come what may. There must be an ending somewhere."

So, press on he did, and finally the end was found. And, it was the end, indeed, for there the cavern closed on all sides, and there was no further passage.

"All this walk for nothing, eh?" Dick complained. "This is rough, but it was not to be helped. I must go back. My candle is not going to last me half-way there, but I'll hurry."

And he did, trying to reach the branching passage before his light failed and went out, but in that he was disappointed.

As the candle died away, however, he lighted a cigar, and by its tiny spark guided himself back along the broad passage till he came at last to the branching way, into which he turned.

It would not do to give up his explorations yet, for he must find a way out if there was one. It would not do to go back again into the pocket if that could be avoided at all.

So, he kept on, and at last was rewarded. Just as day was breaking in the east he came out upon the plain through a narrow opening, and not far away was the clump of cottonwoods.

CHAPTER XII.

THE GIANT'S PRIZE.

"HALT! Who comes there?"

It was the salute that greeted Deadwood Dick when he reached his own camp in the clump of cottonwoods.

"It's I, Deadwood Dick!" he promptly answered. "How has everything been going here, Ted? Has the night passed quietly?"

"Glad to see ye back again, Mr. Bristol. No, everything ain't been goin' right at all. The merry deuce has been to pay sence you left."

"How is that? What has happened?"

"Well, they have taken Westley prisoner, fer one thing, an' that's about the worst I kin—"

"Westley a prisoner! How in wonders did they get hold of him?"

"It was an accident more'n anything else. We espied some of 'em sneakin' out from their barricade, when the shadows got long, with the aid of the night-glass, and we swooped out thar to hustle 'em back in again."

"The knaves! I thought the story about the Gatling guns would keep them under shelter pretty close."

"And so it did, too; this was only a few of 'em out ter scout. Well, we made a swoop down at 'em an' chased 'em, and Westley's hoss stumbled an' he was thrown. What was worst, we didn't know it till too late, in the dark."

"How did you find it out?"

"When we drew away an' his hoss came out with empty saddle."

"This is too bad, right on top of my own narrow escape. Had they been firing any shots?"

"Yes, some scattering shots."

"It is possible he was killed by one of them, then."

"Not unless they lied like sin. We dashed right back over the ground, and a wild laugh greeted us."

"What ye lookin' fer?" the rascals in the pass shouted out.

"We were silent on the point, but searched on as we galloped, hoping to pick up our man and get back again without loss."

"Well?"

"We know what ye ar' lookin' fer," the same voice called out again. "We ar' up to ye. The man what you've lost is our prisoner, with a bump on his head, but he will be all right purty soon." And then they laughed as a defiance, and what could we do?"

"That is bad, mighty bad. Something must be done. Where is Detective Hardy now?"

"Chances are he'll soon be around here. He has done nothing but keep guard over us guardsmen since Westley was taken."

"He's a careful man. Guess this is he coming now."

Dick's quick ears had caught the sound even before the guardsman, and in a moment more Hardy appeared.

It was just light enough now for him to recognize Dick when he came up, and an ejaculation of satisfaction escaped him.

"Thank Heaven you are back again safe and sound, Bristol!" he greeted. "You are needed now if ever you were. But, I suppose Ted has been telling you about it."

"Yes, he has told me."

"What can we do?"

"Nothing before night again."

"But, Westley will be hanged by that time."

"Little fear of that, if he has the good judgment to play his part."

"You ought to know, having been there; but it looked about certain death for him, we thought."

"They will try to force out of him the secret of the gold *cache* first, and if he can dally with them for a time we will save him."

"How did you escape?"

Dick told his story, and it was listened to with interest.

"Isn't it about as tough a case as you ever tackled?" Detective Hardy asked, when he had heard all.

"It certainly is not the easiest by any means," Dick made reply. "But, we shall get around them somehow and bring them to time, I'm sure. I must now have an hour of sleep."

With the understanding that he was to be called in just an hour, he threw himself upon the ground and was almost instantly asleep.

In the meantime the outlaws were jubilant over their capture.

Giant Jack himself had been the one to make it, and he considered the prisoner as his personal property.

The Spotted Tiger had been up the pocket while the Giant had come out to the end of the pass to see how everything was going there, and while there he had planned a little scouting party.

Under cover of the deepening shadows he did not think discovery could be possible.

When it was made, however, and the horsemen came out after them from the cottonwoods, there was a lively scramble to get back again, and the Giant witnessed Westley's accident.

Quick to take advantage of it, he dashed out with a couple of men and the unfortu-

nate man was carried over the barricade and into the hostile camp.

He was recognized at once, and the Giant was almost beside himself with joy.

"Now I reckon we'll have that ar' treasure," he cried. "Wait till this feller comes to, and see ef we don't force et out of him. Ef we don't et will be a funny thing."

After laughing at the gold-seekers, so to call them, and taunting them, he with three others carried the insensible man up through the pass to the pocket.

In falling, Westley's head had come in contact with a stone, and he was for the time helpless.

When the Giant made known to the Spotted Tiger the prize he had found, or had taken, the Tiger showed less of enthusiasm than he had been expected to show, and with good reason.

If the Giant could force the truth from his prisoner, he, the Tiger, would have to share the fortune he had found.

"You don't seem ter keer a cent about et," the Giant growled. "Don't ye see that we hev got ther secret of that hidden gold right in our hands now? We kin make this feller tell, even ef we have ter torture him."

"Mebby you kin, Giant Jack. I begin ter doubt about thar bein' any gold hyer at all."

"That 'ar is fool talk. Don't we know they hev come ter take et off?"

"We thought they had, but after that man Hyer turned out as he did we don't know what ter think."

"Wull, I'll tell ye what et is, Spotted Tiger, an' I'll tell et to ye right out flat, too. You hev been actin' sort o' mulish 'bout this hyer gold all along, as ef ye wanted et all to yourself and didn't want nobody ter have a hand in et, an' now ef ye don't want ter help me git ther secret out of this hyer prisoner, ye needn't. I kin do et, I reckon, an' then ther hull prize will be mine."

"Et will, hey?"

"I ruther think et will."

"Wull, I happen ter guess et won't. I am captain of this hyer band yet, even ef you ar' the biggest man, an' I guess ther boys will stand with me. Yes, sir, ef that gold is found I am in et, and don't you fail ter remember that as ye paddle along, Giant Jack."

"Then don't you act up mulish no more, but take some interest in things that is fer yer own good as well as mine."

And so it was left, for the time being. They took the prisoner into the cabin occupied by the Giant, where they set about restoring him to consciousness.

When Westley came to he looked around him with a start.

"Where am I?" he demanded.

"Whar ther dogs won't bite you, you kin bet," he was told by the Giant.

The prisoner realized the truth, and his face paled for a moment as the prospect rose before him.

"What do you intend to do with me?" he asked.

"We mean ter have ye show us whar that gold of yours was hid, when et gits light," was the response he got.

"I have no gold buried here, sir."

The Spotted Tiger knew he told only the truth.

"You lie!" cried the Giant. "You lie like sin! We'll see ef torture won't make ye tell, in ther mornin'."

"No amount of torture could make a man tell what he did not know to tell, sir. You might kill me, but that would not help the matter any."

"We'll see ef et won't or not. Ef ye don't give us ther secret et will mean death by torture, that's all. An' ef ye hold out till ye die, then we'll know for sure ye didn't lie to us."

"You are a monster!"

"Yas, so I hev been told afore, an' somehow I begin ter think et must be so. Haw! haw! haw!"

Westley turned from him in disgust, and when the fellow tired of talking to him he gave him a kick and went out, leaving the prisoner securely bound.

For the remainder of the night the camp was still, the outlaws being tired enough to sleep, and it was some time after daylight when the Giant roused himself and bethought him of his prize.

He made haste to see that he was all right, and finding him so, prepared him something to eat.

Westley took the miserable apology for coffee and the chunk of horse meat, for he was hungry and knew the importance of keeping up strength.

A little time later the Spotted Tiger put in his appearance, and soon after that the whole camp was up and astir, and when all had breakfasted—to call it that—they were ready for the *cache* of gold.

Westley was led out and ordered to reveal the secret place.

"I have told you," he said impressively, "that I buried no gold here. I cannot reveal what is not."

"Then what is ther meanin' of this hyer map?" demanded Giant Jack, holding it before his face. "You will take this hyer map and find that 'ar gold, or else we will hang ye in short order."

"Where is the man who brought this to you?" Westley demanded.

"Never you mind where he is," was the savage retort. "You will j'ine him, ef ye don't git a hustle on ye and 'bey orders hyer, mind ye that. Come, now, mosey!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GIANT AND THE TIGER GROWL.

FRANK WESTLEY was a man of coolness and judgment, and he brought these two essential qualities to bear upon his present dilemma.

He saw that the threat to torture him would be no idle one, if he did not make some show of revealing the treasure to the outlaws, and he rapidly evolved something of a scheme.

"Well, I see you have got me in a tight place," he said, "and there isn't a chance for me to get out of it."

"Ha! I'm glad ye see et that way," cried the Giant. "Then ye admit that this hyer map is the jinooine article, do ye?"

"Yes, the map is genuine enough, for my own hand made it."

"Come on, then, and we'll see what you kin do at measurin' et off and findin' ther spot."

"I'll do it on one condition," the prisoner parleyed.

"You'll do et on no condishun a tall!" roared the Giant. "Fetch him right along, men!"

"You can drag a horse to water, but you can't make him drink," the prisoner coolly reminded. "If I am to show you the hiding-place of this gold, you have got to bind yourselves to a promise."

"Oh! ef that's all, we kin do that. A promise is easy made. What is et ye ar' after?"

"Were I a single man, I would make no terms with you whatever, but would bid you do your worst. As it is, I desire to live. If I show you the hiding-place of my gold, you must pledge yourselves to give me one thousand dollars' worth of it and let me go free. Do you agree to that?"

The mentioning of the sum of a thousand dollars' worth was intended to carry the impression that he really meant to disclose his secret.

And, it was so effective, too, that the Spotted Tiger turned just a shade pale at the thought that his secret was about to be made

known to the whole band, and he despoiled of it.

He would have liked to kill the prisoner there and then, and his hand was upon a weapon with nervous touch. It was only his fear of the consequences from Giant Jack that deterred him.

"Yas, we agree to et, of course," the Giant readily promised. "You show us ther spot, an' then we'll do what's right by you. Ain't that right, Spotted Tiger?"

"Is'pose et is," was the sullen response. "You ar' doin' et. Ther prisoner is yourn."

"You ar' inclined ter mule again, I see. I begin ter suspect that thar is somethin' crooked about you, hang me ef I don't."

"Then that's your fault. What do ye want me ter do? Want me ter git up an' crow? I believe this feller is only playin' roots on us anyhow. You'll hear me whoop et up when ther find is made."

"All right, an' we'll all whoop together. Come on, now, feller, and let's see ye pace out this hyer map."

Westley had been disarmed, of course, and now he had been unbound, too, and was free to lead the search as he would. And the map was put in his hands as the Giant spoke.

With the map in hand he advanced up the pocket, finally coming to the point from which the outlaws themselves had several times measured.

Here he stopped, looked well at the map, and began pacing forward from that point toward the creek.

Following the directions of the map in its various turns, greatly to the delight of the Spotted Tiger, the prisoner eventually came to the bank of the creek, and had some paces still to make.

The Spotted Tiger knew that it was not the intention of the prisoner to reveal his secret.

"Wull, hyer we ar'," said Jack. "We hev paced et off this hyer way a dozen o' times. Whar is ther spot?"

"Did you still follow the map from here?" the prisoner asked.

"We followed et as near as we knowed how," the Tiger spoke up. "Jest show us how et orter be follered."

"Well, it ought to be paced on to that point out there in the bed of the creek, but as I do not care for a wetting I am not going to do it. How far out do you think that bright stone lies?"

He pointed to a gleaming split boulder on the creek bottom.

"Bout seven paces, I should say," the Giant responded. "Then that's ther spot that round dot on ther map means, is et?"

"Yes, that is the place, and we will call it six paces and a half. Then, the same distance back again makes it thirteen paces. Do you understand?"

"Yes, we git aboard with ye," the Tiger answered.

"Well, from the shore here, then, we must pace off according to the map again, and then take off thirteen paces from the total, and there we are."

"By blazes!" cried the Spotted Tiger, "why didn't we think of that, Jack!"

The Tiger was overjoyed. He saw in all this a clever piece of planning to still keep the true hiding-place a secret, and he was willing to aid all in his power to do it.

"Reckon et's 'cause we hadn't ther clue to et," the Giant responded, to his exclamation. "Go on, prisoner, an' let's see ther end of et."

Westley paced forward again, now almost dreading the outcome, for this was all blind work with him since the map had not been made on the ground at all, but had been drawn from memory for Deadwood Dick's venture.

He went forward, slowly, the required number of paces according to the map,

passing as he did so a spot where an unusual amount of digging had been done.

This was a spot where a curious arrangement of stones had been found by the outlaws, and they had suspected that possibly the gold was hid near that spot and had acted upon suspicion and dug for it.

Coming to the end, the prisoner turned and retraced thirteen steps, as he had suggested, and, it brought him back to the spot where the digging had been done; and not only so, but to the deepest part of the excavation that had been made in the vain search.

The prisoner's heart gave a leap of exultation! He had the best chance in the world to declare that the treasure had already been discovered, and he acted upon the suggestion without weighing it for a moment.

"Gone!" he exclaimed, and his tone and manner carried the conviction that he had met with a genuine disappointment.

The Spotted Tiger, greatly pleased with the success of the prisoner's ruse, and more pleased to think his own secret was still safe, could not have helped the look of exultation that came upon his face, and which, as Jack turned upon him, was plainly read there.

"Curse ye, Spotted Tiger!" the Giant cried, fiercely. "You hev got ahead of us on this deal, and hev hid ther gold some's else!"

"No, no, honor bright I ain't!" the Tiger protested, paling suddenly under the accusation.

"Ye lie, dast ye! Yer face showed that ye knowed et wasn't hyer!"

"I knowed nothin' of ther kind."

"An' this explains why ye hev been actin' ther mule all along about et. By ther blue blazes, Spotted Tiger, you hev got ter show us whar that gold is, or you hev got ter die!"

With his threat the Giant whipped out a knife and advanced savagely.

"I tell ye I haven't found nothin' hyer a tall!" the Tiger denied warmly, retreating and likewise drawing a weapon. "If you come another step nearer I'll drop ye in yer tracks, cuss ye!"

"Wull, I'm comin' nearer, and don't ye ferget et," shouted the big ruffian. "You hev tried ter play et on us, but we ain't goin' ter stand et; hey, boys?"

"Not much we ain't! Ef he has taken that 'ar treasure he has got ter give et up again."

"But, I tell ye I haven't touched et!" repeated the Tiger. "I haven't done no diggin' hyer! Et seems ter me you ar' jumpin' at a shadder, Giant Jack. When hev I had time ter do any diggin' hyer an' nobody knew et?"

"I'll tell ye when, cuss ye! Ye was a mighty long while gettin' out from hyer last night when I went out with ther men to the end of ther pass. I believe you know what's become of this hyer gold, an' you hev got ter own up or fight!"

"What makes you so strong in your suspicion?" asked Westley.

"'Cause he ain't hunted fer et with no heart in et from ther first, that's one reason. An' jest now I see a look of brag on his face when we kem to ther spot hyer an' you said et was gone."

Westley recognized a chance to play for a double point. He could further impress upon them the honesty with which he had sought the hiding-place of the gold, and at the same time perhaps avert a fight and save the Tiger's life, for he did not think the Tiger could stand against the Giant.

"If that is the case you must not kill him," he said. "If he knows the secret of where the gold is now, he must not be blotted out, for that would blot out the secret at the same time. I have an interest in this for a thousand, you must bear in mind, to say nothing of my life and liberty."

"That's fair spoken," the Tiger took up

immediately, he having about the same ax to grind. "Watch me, ef ye want to, an' see ef ye find me walkin' in my sleep or otherwise to ther place wharther gold is hid. Et's gone, so ther prisoner 'clares, an' I'm as anxious as anybody ter know who has hid et. Et's plain that et has been somebody in ther band."

"Then we want ter know who that somebody was!" cried the Giant.

"Jest ez likely ter hev been you as anybody," the Tiger growled. "You ar' makin' ther greatest howl over et of anybody hyer, seems ter me."

There was a war of words, then, and the two almost came to a fight, but at last they cooled down, when it was proposed that they should have a little fun by hanging their prisoner, Westley.

CHAPTER XIV.

NARROWING THE CIRCLE.

In the mean time Dick Bristol, awakened from his hour's sleep, was fresh for the duties and dangers of another day.

The first thing he did was to dispatch a trusty messenger for aid, for he had now a scheme in mind which his present force, he feared, would enable him to carry out only in part till aid came.

That done, his next step was to learn something about the fate of Westley, and to do that meant a trip through the cavern to the point above the pocket camp where the doings of the outlaws could be seen, and from which point entrance must be had into the camp.

In company with three others he set out to take this trip, leaving Hardy in command of the camp in the cottonwoods.

When they reached, in due time, the opening in the side of the rocky wall above the camp, and looked through, they beheld an exciting scene in the pocket below.

There were the two outlaw ringleaders, with a large number of their men, all in an excited circle around the prisoner, Westley, whom they were preparing to hang, as was evident enough.

"Yas, we'll rope him," yelled the Tiger, who had no object in sparing the man's life. "We'll yank him right up, now."

The Tiger was jealous of the secret he held, and did not want any one else to share it with him! Now was the time, therefore, to get in his best work.

"That's what we will," approved the Giant. "He ain't no use to us now, sence ther treasure has been taken from whar he put et. Git ready that rope, boys! We'll make short work o' him!"

"The miserable wretches!" grated Deadwood Dick, as he looked on and heard. "I think I'll take a hand in this game. But, I must be quick about it, or it will be too late."

Unslinging his rifle, for he had brought that with him, he quickly removed the cartridges it contained and put in others in their stead.

That done, he laid the rifle down, and taking pencil and paper, hastily jotted a message.

"Your bowie, quick!" he then said to one of his men.

The knife was given.

Dick tied the paper around the hilt of it securely, and leaning out over the edge of the opening, hurled it downward into the crowd of men below!

It had not been his desire or intention to hit any one, though the chances were fair for his doing so, but hit some one the knife did, in the fleshy part of his back.

This man was, as it happened, the one who was just in the act of putting a noose in the rope, and he dropped the rope and leaped clear from the ground with a yell of pain, while the other outlaws drew away from him with something of fear, staring at the bowie in his back.

"What in hot means this hyer?" cried the Spotted Tiger, stepping forward and jerking the knife out. "Hyer's a message, as I hve!"

"Whar did et come from?" cried the Giant, looking up, as did all the rest.

But they could see nothing, for Dick had drawn back now and the growth of grass hid the crevice in the rocks.

"Thar's a paper hyer on this bowie," the Tiger yelled. "Et is a message, as I said et was at sight."

He was already untying the string that held the paper in place, and in a moment had it off.

Then he opened the paper and read aloud.

"OUTLAWS OF HARD HOLE:—

"Hang not that man. It is death to the man who undertakes to do it."

"SPIRIT OF THE CLOUDS."

Every man of them now looked up, scanning the walls on every side, but nothing suspicious was to be seen, and where the knife had come from was a mystery.

"Et was never thrown from far," declared the wounded man. "Et couldn't hit me so sure an' so hard ef et had been. 'Tend ter my hurt, somebody, fore I bleed ter death hyer, will ye?"

Westley, who had grown pale in his despair, now regained hope.

He knew Deadwood Dick was on hand to defend him!

"That message means what it says, men," he declared. "The man who tries to hang me will surely die. That is the decree you have read; take warning by the wound this man has received."

"Take warnin' nothin'!" yelled the wounded ruffian. "We'll hang ye now ef et brings down a hundred knives!"

Told that his wound was only a flesh cut, and now terribly angered, he took up the rope again to finish his work.

He leaped toward the prisoner, but, even as he leaped he fell, writhing, in the dust. A bullet from Deadwood Dick's unerring silent rifle had spoken!

The wretches fell back now in dismay, their faces blanching, and one of their number gasped:

"We might as well give et up! They hev found another way in hyer, an' we can't hold ther place no longer."

"Not by a quill full we won't levant!" cried the Giant. "It's only that cuss Hyer in hidin' some-ers, fer we know he didn't git out of ther pocket las' night. Come, get that rope ready."

But no one obeyed the order, and the wary Giant did not care about doing it himself.

"Spare my life as you promised," spoke the prisoner, remindingly.

"Wull, I don't know but et would be fair," the Giant assented promptly, glad to get out of the bad fix. "We'll lock you up till night, anyhow. Thar is ther cabin, walk inter et, prisoner!"

Westley obeyed, and big Jack closed the door upon him.

Many eyes had been searching all this time for the hiding-place of the man who had sent the unerring bullet, but failed to discover it, and now Giant Jack and the Spotted Tiger walked away to the headquarters cabin.

Leaving two of his men there at the end of the cavern branch that opened upon the pocket, and the rifle with them, Deadwood Dick returned with the other to the camp in the cottonwoods, where preparations were carried forward for the working out of his plans for the night.

The day passed without exciting incident. When night came it was dark indeed, for the moon would not be up as early as on the previous night, and as soon as darkness had fallen Dick's plans began to be put into execution.

From the opening of the cavern passage above the camp he was lowered with a rope, in disguise to appear an outlaw himself, and

as soon as down he sought the cabin where Frank Westley was confined.

He had to use caution, but he was equal to the emergency.

Getting around to the rear of the cabin, he forced the only window on that side.

"Westley!" he whispered.

"Here!" the reply.

It was enough. In another moment Deadwood Dick was within, when he soon freed the young gold-seeker of his bonds.

Little was said, but they got out again as soon as possible and Dick led the way to the place where the rope was still dangling! and in a few minutes more Westley was safe out of the pocket.

The rescue was none too soon, for barely had Westley made good his escape when a score of the outlaws, under the leadership of the Spotted Tiger, who wanted Westley out of the way, came silently to the cabin and opened the door.

They had one light with them, and by its aid the discovery was immediately made that the prisoner was gone!

"Et's a fernal trick, that's what et is!" roared the baffled and irate Tiger. "How has he got away?"

"He's had help, that's how," declared one man. "Et's been that feller what killed poor Sneed. Ef we could find him we'd wind him up, you bet!"

And so they all bet, but that did not place the object of their impotent rage in their hands. And even as they talked, the dauntless detective mingled with them, for this was now a part of the plan.

"We'll have ter send out fer ther Giant," the Tiger observed. "Et won't do not ter tell him his prisoner is gone. Go out, one of ye, an' fetch him in hyer at oncet."

"I'll go," offered Deadwood Dick, in a rough voice, and he started immediately upon his errand.

He was alone, and when he came to the place where the pass widened he stooped by the shelving rock and whispered:

"Are you there, old man?"

"Great hambone, yes!" was the response.

"When be I ter let'er go?"

"Wait till you hear me come back this way, with another man with me, and time yourself to half an hour after that, as near as you can by guessing; then give the alarm."

"All right, boyee; I'll do et that way, an' when they hear my bazzoo they'll think somethin' is wrong, you kin bet."

Dick ran on, and coming to the barricade, cried out:

"Whar's Giant Jack? Ther Spotted Tiger wants him at ther pocket jes' as soon as he kin put in his appear. Ther prisoner has 'scaped, an' ther dickins is ter pay in general!"

CHAPTER XV.

TRAPPING THE TIGER.

GIANT JACK was at hand, and leaped to his feet immediately and came forth.

"What is et?" he demanded roughly.

"How did he git away? What is ter pay thar? But, come along with ye, an' ye kin tell me 'bout et as we go along."

And he set off on a trot, shouting back to the men to keep up a good watch till his return.

"Now, what is et?" he demanded of Dick, as they ran side by side.

"Wull, about what I told ye, an' nothin' more'n that; but ther Spotted Tiger thought you'd orter know et at oncet."

"How did you find out he was gone?"

"Wull, ther Tiger was goin' ter give ther boys a treat by hangin' him, and when we went fer him he wasn't thar."

"What? Ther Spotted Tiger was goin' ter hang my prisoner an' me not thar? I reckon I'll call him to account fer that."

Big Jack increased his pace, and nothing more was said till they came out into the pocket.

There the crowd was before the headquarters cabin, with numerous lights.

"Giant, ther prisoner has gi'n us ther slip," the Spotted Tiger called out, as the Giant came in.

"Yas, cuss ye! an' what sort o' slip was you goin' ter give him?" demanded the stalwart, fiercely. "What right had you ter take et on yourself ter hang my prisoner?"

"Wull, ther boys wanted a treat, an' I thort—"

"They did, hey? Wull, we'll give 'em one now. Walk yerself out hyer an' meet me, man ter man!"

The Spotted Tiger turned pale all around among his spots, while the spots themselves grew more livid than they were naturally.

"I don't want ter fight you," he weakened. "What do we want ter fight fer? And ther prisoner wasn't no good ter you anyhow, for he proved plain enough that ther gold was gone—"

"Yas, an' it was gone in a queer way, too. I ain't fergot that yet, either. Come, git out yer knife an' meet me."

"But, I won't fight ye, Giant, an' that settles et. You ar' mad, now, an' don't know what ye're doin'—"

"I'll show ye what I'm doin', cuss ye! Ef ye don't fight I'll kill ye anyhow."

"No, no; don't kill him," sung out Dick, from the crowd. "Don't forget that mebbey he has ther secret of ther gold, an' we want that, ye know."

"That's so, hang ther luck! Et ain't 'cause ye don't deserve et that I don't kill ye, Tiger, fer ye hadn't no business ter try ter hang my prisoner. You hev got ter walk straight, I'm tellin' ye."

"I thort ye would think better of et," the Tiger sullenly growled.

"Look out or I may change my mind yet!"

"Change et ef ye want to."

"Hev ye looked fer that prisoner any?" Jack inquired, letting the matter drop.

"Yas, all around, but he's gone jest like t'other, an' not a sign of him left anywhere. I begin ter think we ar' bein' played with, Jack."

They had a considerable talk, after which a further search was proposed and the men with the lights set off in different directions; then, the Giant being alone for a moment, Deadwood Dick touched his arm.

"Come this way a minnit, Giant Jack," he whispered. "I hev discovered somethin'. Don't be seen."

He moved off immediately, and looking around for a second the Giant followed.

Dick led the way to the place under the cliff where the rope hung from the opening far above, and there stopped for the Giant to come up.

Jack immediately joined him, when, with a leap like that of a panther, Dick sprung upon him and bore him to the ground, his steel-like grip upon his throat.

Not a sound had been made; and instantly two other men came to Dick's aid and the big human brute was gagged and bound securely.

That done, the rope was fastened to him and he was drawn up out of the pocket.

One object of Dick's mission had been gained easily.

The three men waited there under the cliff, and after a little while a fourth joined them, coming down the rope from above.

He reported that the Giant had been landed at the top, and was secure under guard. And one by one the men continued to descend into the pocket until they numbered a dozen.

Each man of them was armed with rifle and revolvers, and in a body they moved toward the cabin headquarters, keeping in the deepest shadows.

Arriving there, they concealed themselves

behind the cabin, and there waited for an expected signal.

Some time passed, and the searchers for the escaped prisoner were returning to the cabin headquarters, when suddenly an alarm was sounded.

"Hilloo, Spotted Tiger!" yelled a voice in the pass. "Hilloo, Giant Jack! Hustle out hyer as fast as ever ye kin! Ther varmints ar' comin' up with them 'ar Gatlin' guns."

The Spotted Tiger took the alarm at once, and shouted for his men to gather in haste.

"Hilloo, thar! Hilloo, hilloo, hilloo!" yelled the voice in the pass. "Do ye hear me, Tiger?"

"Yes," the Tiger shouted back. "We're comin'. Hold ther fort till we git thar, Mose!"

That was all, and in haste the Tiger got his men together, and set out at top of their speed for the other end of the pass.

"Good for Old Avalanche!" said Deadwood Dick, when the last man had gone, and he and his dozen came out from the shadows. "Now we have got them, and when they return they will meet a surprise."

They entered the cabin fort, as such it has been described, and when a light had been made, surveyed it critically.

Ready at the loopholes were several magazine rifles, showing that the outlaws had not been unprepared for them, did they gain entrance into the pass and try to get into the pocket.

Here a dozen men could keep an army at bay as long as the cabin remained for their shelter.

Meantime the outlaws were dashing on toward the end of the pass, and as they neared there they had their weapons ready in hand for action as soon as they reached the scene of the expected conflict.

When they came up, however, and found everything peaceful and quiet, what was their surprise!

"What does et mean?" demanded the Tiger, fiercely. "Who was et brought that alarm to ther pocket?"

"What 'larm?" asked the captain of the guard, innocently.

"Why, the call for help from here. Somebody said the gang out there was comin' up with their Gatlin' guns to wipe ye out, and told us ter git hyer quick as ever we could."

"Don't know nothin' 'bout et, Cap'n Tiger; thar is ther guns, out thar jest whar they wur, an' hyer is us, jest ther same as we wuz. Don't know what ter make of et."

"What do you make of et, Jack?" and the Tiger looked around to find his burly pard.

But, the Giant was not there to respond!

"Is this trick somethin' of *his* doin's?" the Tiger raved. "Has he got that 'ar gold, an' is he goin' ter play us false ef he kin? I'll bet he won't do et ef we know ourselves. Hey, boys?"

This hint that maybe the Giant had taken the gold, or had found it at least, was to win the men over to himself.

"You bet he won't!" the men cried.

"Come back with me, about twenty of ye, an' we'll try ter git some onderstandin' 'bout this hyer thing."

Back again they dashed, not only twenty but nearer fifty of them, with the Tiger in the lead, and they paused not till they were brought to a sudden and unexpected stop.

As they were coming out near the cabin headquarters, a light suddenly flashed upon them, and a voice ordered them to halt.

"Another step this way," was the warning, "and a dozen of you will bite the dust."

"Et's a trick!" cried the Tiger, wildly. "Giant Jack, et's your life or mine, this time! Boys, forward, charge!"

"Fire!"

Out blazed the rifles from the loopholes, and over tumbled some six or eight of the outlaws in the lead, the others falling back and getting out of range with haste.

"Try it again, if you want more!" Deadwood Dick called out.

By a miracle, almost, the Spotted Tiger had been one to escape the deadly volley, and he now called out from behind a protecting corner in the pass:

"Who in tanel ar' ye, anyhow? How did ye git in thar?"

"We are Deadwood Dick and his little company," Dick informed him. "Ever hear of me, you brute, well named Tiger?"

"Deadwood Dick!" and the exclamation was heard in a hollow, frightened voice.

"Then et's all up wi' us now, pards. We didn't know who we was buckin' ergainst."

"You are right; it is all up with you," Dick retorted. "Gather up your dead and wounded here and take them back out of sight, and to-morrow we will see what terms you will feel like accepting."

"Ye won't shoot us ef we come out ter git our pards?"

"No."

The promise was given and accepted; the dead and wounded were taken back into the pass out of sight, and the ruffians did not show themselves again that night.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SURRENDER.

WHEN morning dawned it found Deadwood Dick in command of twelve men on the plain in front of the pass.

The two Gatling guns, as they were still thought to be by the outlaws, were in nearer position than before, and each was manned by three men. Dick and the other seven were between the guns.

The rest of the party were at the cabin fort in the pocket, where they could hold the pass at that end against almost any odds. The opening into the cavern from the center of the pass had been stopped up with bowlders and was not likely to be discovered.

When Dick saw the outlaws astir he called out to them, demanding an interview with the Spotted Tiger.

That ugly customer made his appearance on top of the barricade, waving a white rag for his protection.

"Well, what is it to be?" Dick asked of him. "Will you surrender? or must we starve you into submission?"

"S'posen we surrender, what will ye do with us?" the Tiger asked.

"Make you prisoners, of course, and turn you over to the authorities to be dealt with according to law."

"An' ef we don't surrender, what then?"

"Then you will have to stay there, for you know there is no possible chance for you to get out. If you attempt to break out this way not a dozen of you can escape the deadly fire of these Gatling guns, and it is impossible for you to get out at the other end."

The Tiger was seen conferring with his men.

"We'll surrender on one condition," he presently called out. "Ef ye will let us git away with our lives we will file out an' go away like a flock o' lambs, Deadwood Dick. An' you won't never hear of us in these hyer parts no more."

"Not to be thought of!" Dick refused. "You must lay down your weapons and come out one by one, till all are out and made prisoners, and then you will be taken care of properly until you are delivered to the officers. These are the only terms."

"Where is Giant Jack?" the Tiger called out. "Have ye seen him? Has he been playin' us false?"

Jack is my prisoner, for a murder committed in California," Dick explained. "I came here to get him, and I have succeeded."

"Good! I'm glad o' that! Now, Deadwood Dick, will ye let me come out thar fer jest a word wi' you in private? An' will ye let me come back hyer again, if we don't agree?"

"Yes, I'll do that; but you must come unarmed."

"I take ye at yer word."

The outlaw chief was seen to throw off his belt of weapons, and stepped forth toward Dick boldly.

Dick advanced a little way to meet him, and when they met, demanded to know the object of the interview.

"I'll tell ye," said the outlaw, in confidence. "I have found ther richest pocket o' gold ye ever dreamed of, an' ef ye will let me go from hyer a free man, jest as I am, I'll tell ye whar et is."

"Cannot do it!" Dick declared. "You know no secrets about that pocket that are not known to me. You have taken pains and trouble in vain this time. Go back to your men, and when you are ready to surrender, let me know. You had better come to terms."

"Terms is what I want ter come to, Deadwood Dick. Won't ye give me no show a tall?"

"You have heard what I have to say, sir."

Dick waved him away, and he slunk back to his men behind the barricade.

It was along about the middle of the afternoon, when hunger and thirst had begun to be felt pretty keenly, that he made his appearance again, this time to announce their surrender.

Deadwood Dick told him to lay down his weapons and come out, his men to follow in turn, one at a time, until all had been taken care of, promising them that their lives would be safe as long as they were in his charge, and that they should be fed.

So, the Spotted Tiger gave up and came out, and his men followed, one at a time, Dick and some of his men meeting and securing the hands of each as he came forth.

There were ninety odd of them, all told, and a hideous horde they were.

They were fed, and put under guard for the remainder of the day and night.

On the following afternoon a company of soldiers arrived upon the scene, to whom the prisoners were turned over, except Giant Jack, who was Deadwood Dick's own especial prize.

And so the nest of outlaws was broken up, and the pocket restored to its rightful owner. Westley, of course, was very grateful to Bristol, and wanted him to take a share in the claim, but Dick would accept only thanks for what he had done.

The young gold-hunter entered his claim officially at once, and the pocket was granted to him. It made him more than independent for life. He invited relations and friends to share his good fortune with him, and in a brief time a camp sprung up that was worthy the name the pocket had borne at first—Rose Dell. There is one of the richest mines to be found in that section.

Deadwood Dick reported in person to the governor, taking his prisoner with him, and received the hearty thanks of that official for the remarkable service rendered. The delighted governor assured him that whenever a case came up that was likely to puzzle him, he would fall back at once upon the detective who never failed, and let him take it in hand.

As he did!

THE END.

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